MUSIC DRAMA OF THE FUTURE

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By RUTLAND BOUGHTON
& REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

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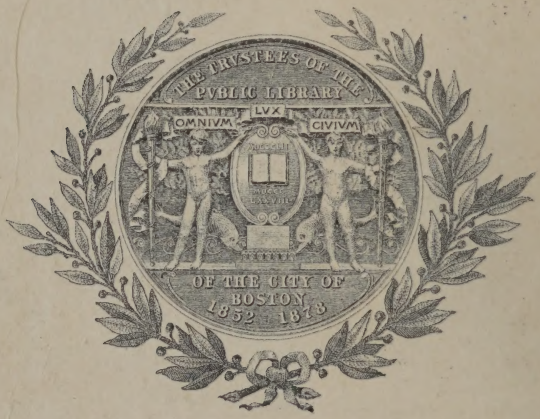

The Wild Duck
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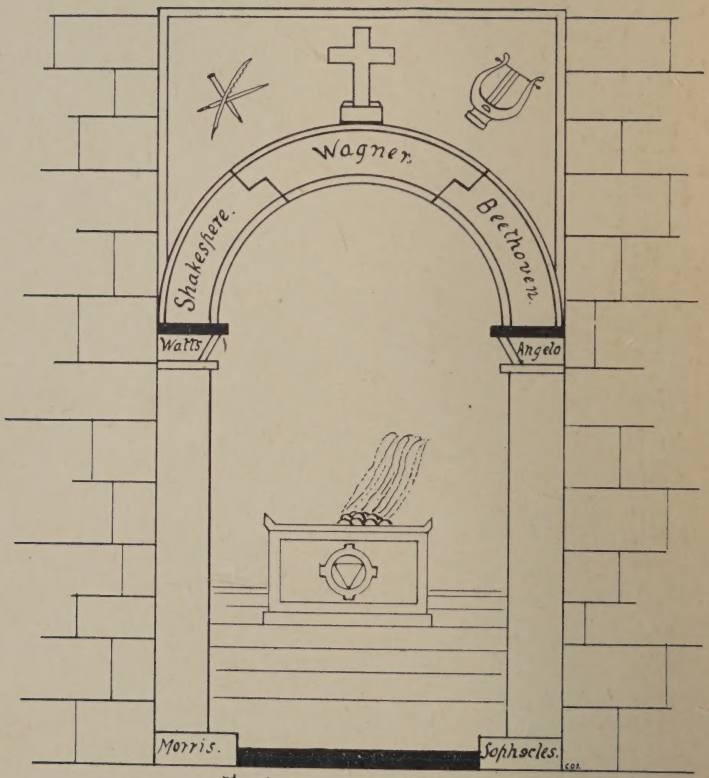
MUSIC-DRAMA OF THE FUTURE.



The Gate of The Future.

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MUSIC-DRAMA OF THE FUTURE

UTHER AND IGRAINE

CHORAL DRAMA

BY

RUTLAND BOUGHTON

AND

REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

With Essays by the Collaborators

LONDON:
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TO

GRANVILLE BANTOCK

THE MOST GENEROUS OF MUSICIANS.

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DRAMA OF THE FUTURE.

AN ESSAY ON CHORAL DRAMA.

By RUTLAND BOUGHTON.

I.

THE following pages contain a half-taste of a work which achieves what Wagner failed thoroughly to achieve. I do not intend to depreciate Wagner, to whose work Buckley and I are so greatly indebted; but neither will I depreciate our work by affecting modesty in regard to our continuation of the German master's drama. Wagner has opened the way to the perfection of modern dramatic art. Hitherto men have looked at the path which he cleared, and because the end of it was darkness they have put up the notice-board: No Thoroughfare. We know that darkness. It is not that of a blind alley, but of an overgrowth which has been flourishing since the palmy days of Greek drama. And knowing that, we intend to let in the light of day and take down that absurd notice-board.

Those who have ears to hear the poetry and the inevitable music of "Uther and Igraine"—the first of a series of music-dramas dealing with contemporary Britain—can skip this essay. It is not written for unpoetical and unmusical people, because they can always enjoy poetry and music without explanations; but the greater part of the artistic section of the community must always go to

school, and will be better advised to learn now from us what the work is, than to decide for themselves what it is not, and so make themselves a laughing-stock for all who come after.

2.

The dramatic attempts of primitive man are mere imitations of his actual life and pursuits—a story of love-making, hunting or war. Thus the first flowering of the dramatic instinct, the desire to play, the power to beauty as H. G. Wells calls it, springs from the reality of life, and not from the vague nothingness of the art-for-art's-saker. But, after all, these purely realistic and imitative efforts are indications of a childish stage. Life is being expressed, indeed, but it is not a life of any true significance. The bower-birds achieve almost as much.

However, primitive man soon gets beyond this stage. The growing power of imagination strains beyond the actuality of life, and seeks to express its wonder at the mystery which lies there. Man is no longer content with a realistic portrayal which weakly throws the mind back on deeds far more vivid in the actual moment of experience; for at this point his artistic impulse becomes definitely religious, and he attempts to express it by signs and symbols always more or less drawn from physical life, but regularly yearning beyond into the life of the mind.

3.

As we look upon a new-born baby, or into the eyes of a child just awaked from sleep, or upon the still body of one we have known in movement, our minds surely sink in the mystery of it all. And if birth be wondrous and sacred, the womb and phallus are symbols of that wonder and

sanctity. Hence the use of the phallus as a symbol in the Greek drama. Hence the symbolic ritual of the Mashonas to-day—a sexual performance probably very similar to the dance from which grew the drama of the Greeks.

The tendency of religion to symbolism is inveterate. Sun-worship, sea-worship, thanksgiving for rain or victory, adoration of the wheat ear, solemn memorial of human fellowship with deity, holy communion—whatever may be the desire seeking expression, symbolism of word or act or both is instinctively used. And where this purposeful symbolism fails, as it does from time to time —as it failed with the Puritans, as it has failed in modern commercial England—religion becomes mere moralising, and nobody pays any attention to it. The parables of Christ, the fables of Æsop, the pictures of Watts, the Romish mass, the dance of the Mashonas, the Shakespearean drama, are different symbolic means of expressing untellable things; but modern church sermons, and the general run of modern dramas, having nothing religious to say, say it in a dull, moralising, irreligious manner —in other words, without the use of symbols.

4.

Further, the desire for the expression of a religious idea regularly leads to the employment of music. Religious emotion is the white-heat of emotion; and with the rise of feeling all expression converges upon music. From the croon of babyhood worshipping a doll to the emotional complexity of the Christian sacraments there is an instinctive tendency to music. And because music is inherently beautiful, shapely, orderly and inevitable, these same characteristics are imparted to the symbolic drama. It was music which formed the Greek drama. It was music which gave form to the most perfect celebration of the Last Supper—that in "Parsifal."

When once religious desire reaches that degree of passion at which it is forced to find outer expression, from

China to Peru, literally, it is music which gives that expression its form. No matter how sincere a sect may be, it can make no headway nor heartway nor skyway unless its rites be impregnated by the power of music. Wagner said that music was a woman; it is a man, and poetry itself is impossible until music has yielded the mood, the rhythm of metre, the colour of vowel, and the inevitable feeling for shapeliness and balance. Though the Puritan feared beauty as he feared the devil, he could not get rid of music; and music is the very soul of beauty. Music is the standard by which judges of poetry, and even of painting, recognise an approach to objective perfection as distinct from the variety of subjective taste. Music is, in fact, the only really creative art; and no religious drama, using music, can fail to become a music-drama, while if it do not use music it ceases to be religious.

5.

In the period of Greek drama from Æschylus to Aristophanes there are examples of all that is possible in the development of dramatic art.

Æschylus gives us the drama in its original form—a divine service. His conceptions are massed, and thus in immediate line of descent from the choral dance. His ideas are awful, his characters terribly inhuman. When he leaves the mountains of the gods to deal with his fellows of the plains his own dazzled vision remains remote from the ways of men. His very words betoken a mind too vast to enter into just relation with normal men: The countless laughter of ocean! The sea aflower with corpses! Troy's beard of streaming flame! This mighty rhetoric is sublime, but we feel that it has very little connection with life as it is lived. It might serve in a drama for gods or supermen, but with ordinary folk it fails for sheer immensity. In Æschylus the recluse, the prophet and the poet prevail over the dramatist, as one or more of them prevail in Goethe, Schiller, Byron,

Shelley, Swinburne, and sometimes even in Shakespeare and Wagner. We hearken respectfully to a prophet if he gets in our way, but we always feel that he is too severe upon us. The Æschylean drama is a religious mystery, like High Mass and a Salvation Army procession. We feel their monstrous beauty, but are relieved to get away from them. For a mystery without a commonplace human application is a bore.

Nevertheless, like Wagner, Æschylus developed the drama to such a point that the work of his successor was clearly indicated—for the successor. So it was that Sophocles took up the development of drama in the morning of its perfection—at that moment when its religious purpose and artistic beauty had got into relation with the lives of men.

6.

The dramas enacted in the modern churches fail to get home to men just because the symbols they use are of an alien type. Jewish metaphysics are, at bottom, the same as English or Irish metaphysics; but the attitude and the symbols are necessarily different. If the Bishop of London were to erect a golden calf at St. Paul's and set his priests and choir dancing round it, the symbol would fail of effect for very novelty of the ceremony. But in the "Mammon" of G. F. Watts, "The Triumph of Mammon" of John Davidson and the "Major Barbara" of Bernard Shaw, we have various ways of presenting the same idea to the modern Briton—not as a foreign allegory, inapplicable to his age and individuality, but as an immediate and personal fact. So much for the attitude.

The racial value of the symbols used is not so generally credited. Wagner thoroughly believed in the use of national legends; and W. B. Yeats in "Ideas of Good and Evil," and Edward Carpenter in "The Art of Creation," have set before us proof enough of the transmission, and even the increased momentum of legendary

ideas in heredity. And if this be true, the first two of the modern British art-works mentioned above, seriously weaken their appeal by ignoring the fact. (Why I except the third will be seen shortly.) Better a modern indigenous symbol than the Hebrew calf; but better still a racial native legendary symbol such as Wagner has given us in the "Ring of the Niblungs." This last will also appeal to the Norse element in our nation. A Celtic legend would probably have even stronger force.

So, if the Bishop of London were to set up a stage in St. Paul's, and enact the Mammon metaphysic thereon by means of native myth, or even modern realistic drama, the thing would not be absurd. Nobody would laugh at that—though the priests of the Stock Exchange might, perhaps, lynch the Bishop.

An act of this sort would bring the religion of the legendary symbols into immediate relation with modern life; and that is exactly what Sophocles did. What in Æschylus is monstrous and remote becomes in Sophocles typical and immediate. The religious origin and purpose, the musical outline and beauty, and the legendary symbolism remain; but they are made real and applicable to the average man by means of human character-types instead of divine monsters. This is what Bernard Shaw very truly calls Melodrama.

7.

In the reprint of Shaw's dramatic criticisms, we find: "A really good Adelphi melodrama is very hard to get. It should be a simple and sincere drama of action and feeling, kept well within that vast tract of passion and motive which is common to the philosopher and the labourer, relieved by plenty of fun, and depending for variety of human character, not on the high comedy idiosyncrasies which individualise people in spite of the closest similarity of age, sex and circumstances, but on broad contrasts between types of youth and age, sym-

pathy and selfishness, the masculine and the feminine, the serious and the frivolous, the sublime and the ridiculous, and so on. The whole character of the piece must be allegorical, idealistic, full of generalisations and moral lessons; and it must represent conduct as producing swiftly and certainly on the individual the results which in actual life it only produces on the race in the course of many centuries." And all this, barring an undeveloped sense of humour, the Sophoclean melodrama (or music-drama—etymologically the same thing) perfectly presents, as Mr. Frohman would say. As it is our business to create the same kind of drama for the modern Briton, I shall have to recur to it. Let it be enough now to bear in mind that Sophocles preserved the religious character of the drama, but united with that a continuous sense of common everyday life and humanity.

8.

Euripides was the Ibsen of his time. It was his tendency to divorce the drama from the religious spirit, to individualise his characters so that they lost their value as types, and to present immediate life realistically rather than the mysteries of life symbolically.

In an age like that of Euripides, or ours of to-day, a religiously-minded artist is bound to express himself irreligiously. When the common acts of worship have become meaningless conventions the only act of true worship is to scorn them. When the general conception of religion has no bearing upon the ploughing of a field or the buying of cloth, the religious man will flout that conception and concentrate his powers on the ploughing and the buying. Of course, it is a pitiful business when the mysteries and the facts of life get out of connection. But the religious mind, having definitely to choose between the two, will choose a certainty which is tangible, if not creative, rather than an uncertainty which exhibits itself as Mumbo-Jumbo, the gluttony of Christmas, the hysteria of conversion, the very blank blankness of the British city

sabbath, and other kinds of nonsense and blasphemy. This was the position of both Ibsen and Euripides. They both began by following up the religious and dramatic conditions of their predecessors. They both gradually dropped a religious element which had become meaningless and concentrated their powers upon human character as it necessarily exists in such an age. That is why they are both accused of preferring what is vile in human nature. And that is the real misfortune of their position: forced away from religion into a specialised study of human character, they become at last incapable of portraying a human character which shall be generally recognisable. They lose their power to portray types wherein we all *feel* a personal and immediate interest; and offer us instead those fine differences of individuality or those monstrous productions of special circumstance, which make no general appeal—but to which the prig, the student of human character, addresses his eyeglass, analyses and dissects—studies them microscopically as if they were strange beasts dying of unknown diseases! The "Medea" of Euripides and Hedvig in the "Wild Duck" are examples. As if the infanticide and the child-suicide were fit characters for drama! They are monsters born of special morbid circumstances, and can in no way stand as types. Not that it was a moral crime to stage these monsters. It was merely an inevitable artistic stupidity. For only when the majority of mothers kill their children and the majority of children commit suicide can such characters make anything but a specialist appeal.

9.

People complain of realism in art because of its cheapness and vulgarity. The real objection to realism is its utter unreality.* No one who has seen a boat on a

* I think Chesterton must have said this somewhere or other. However, it is true.

playful sea could do anything but laugh at Sir Herbert Tree's staging of the "Tempest" storm, with its languid jerking of canvas floor, and pails of water thrown over the bucking ship's bows. Similarly, anyone who has seen a baby bathed will be more likely to think of the Zoo at feeding-time when hearing Strauss bath his baby in the "Domestic Symphony." And the same applies to Euripides and Ibsen. Jealous wives are very common, women capable even of killing their husbands or their rivals; but few of them will recognise themselves in Medea. Unsympathetic relations between parents and children are common also, but the sensitiveness, skill and courage of Ibsen's Hedvig are, luckily, very infrequent among girls of her age. So the serious problem-drama ends in utter unreality; to be resurrected in comedy.

10.

Aristophanes, Molière and Shaw succeed where Euripides and Ibsen fail—that is to say, fail dramatically—fail in creating types recognisable by the majority of humanity as elements in their own characters. Those special features of human character which the problem-dramatists have been at such pains to elaborate are now held up to ridicule. It is noteworthy that both Aristophanes and Shaw have expressed the opinion that sexual love is a subject only fit for comedy; and that seems just, if they mean the mere triumph or disappointment of sexual desire as distinct from the part played by that desire in the broader reaches of life. But whether that be the case or not, it is clear that the drama which introduces the clear-cut individuality is steering for comedy. The silhouette is far more individual than the photograph, and the silhouette is always funny. So those points (usually concealed, by the way) on which we differ from every other individual can only be a subject for humorous drama—or, if for tragic drama, for the tragedy that ends in the lunatic asylum.

The above outline is rough. Æschylus anticipates and Euripides only gradually forsakes the Sophoclean melodrama, and neither touches the grotesque realism of prose. But the progress from a mainly emotional to a largely intellectual appeal, and thence to absurdity, is sufficiently certain. These cover all that is possible in dramatic art; and the correlation of beauty with the religious, symbolic and typical art, and of ugliness with the irreligious, realistic and specialised art, is equally certain.

II.

The loss of beauty results from a loss of the sense of mystery and wonder; and as these fail, lyrical and musical beauty steadily degenerate into prose. The prose-atmosphere finds its congruity in comedy in its very incongruity as art; but in a serious art-work it is never convincing. Tragedy without beauty makes an effect of sordidness. That is the difference between Shakespeare and much of Ibsen. Those of Shakespeare's characters in conflict with conventional morality are less well *thought* out than Ibsen's. But they are better *felt* out, and evoke greater sympathy because of it. And the process of feeling, as differentiated from thought, is necessarily expressed in terms of beauty. Hence, the more powerful effect of Shakespeare's villains is due to the poet's feeling as distinct from his conception.

Christianity (which is occasionally right, after all) insists upon a simultaneous love of the sinner and loathing for the sin. Who loves Hedda Gabler? Who loves young Alving? Ibsen's treatment of them is cold and arouses no sympathy in us. But the mild rhythmic beauty of blank verse and the glorious tonal beauty of Shakespeare's emotional style so strongly prevail with us, in the case of Othello, for instance, or even of Lady Macbeth (especially in the sleep-walking scene) that our pity is of love's own kinship, even while our moral sympathies are on the conventional side.

12.

And with the passing of beauty goes the type. Serious prose-drama has an undoubted value in that its very existence is a condemnation of the age which produces it; its value is that of the tract. The only artistic value of the prose-drama lies in its absurdity. In England a drama which rouses anger will generally find the anger turned against itself. That has regularly happened in the case of Ibsen's later work. (I am not now concerned to defend this English characteristic, but merely to indicate it as a condition of our dramatic life.) But a drama which defends the sinner or ridicules the wrong strikes a hard blow in the right place. What Hedda Gabler, with a perfect stage technique, fails to achieve for English audiences, Measure for Measure, achieves, in spite of an imperfect technique, because of its beauty, and the first scene of Man and Superman achieves through its humour.

But the drama which looks at Life through the reality of its ugliness not only fails to feed the entire dramatic sense. It is essentially iconoclastic, even in its true form of comedy. It can point a wrong, but it cannot even suggest a right. Instinctively we feel it as impossible to accept its suggestions as to deny its denials. Comedy can indicate the absurdity of hell, but to set forth the commonsense of the kingdom of heaven is beyond it. New light is only possible when we have recognised the darkness of mystery. The drama of life is only possible where the sense of wonder grows creative in beauty. Those churches which have recognised this are the most powerful to-day. There may be a few stagnant sects with a very lowly sense of beauty; but just those churches which are kicking with life are the churches which express their religion principally in artistic form. The Roman Catholics know the value of it; and the Salvation Army would rather be vulgarly artistic than respectably dull. The Plymouth Brethren and the Rationalists seem a little blind to it, but they are stranded on the dry banks of life. They are so solemn about the question of life

eternal that they have forgotten there is no life of any value (eternal or otherwise) without joy.

13.

But although the element of Beauty is preserved in the churches it is out of all contact with reality. If the secularists have forgotten that there is no life without joy, the modern ecclesiastical saints have forgotten that joy is not worth having unless it is the expression of modern life as it is lived. A life without beauty is a dungeon; but beauty without life is a madhouse.

Beauty in the churches is meaningless to-day; it has no living, no dramatic significance. It is not because the churches preach mysteries that they have lost their hold upon life; but because their mysteries are so silly—are not the inevitable mysteries of the common life. It is not because the secularists (who, after all, are only puritans gone mad) preach commonsense that they gain no hold upon the masses of men who know a swede from a mangel, or a chisel from a screwdriver; but because they preach an uncommon sense, very like nonsense—because they deny the mysteries which a man is bound to feel as he watches mangels grow and chisels ply. Denying mystery, they lose the capacity for wonder; and so get out of touch with the life-force behind the mangel and the chisel.

So it is that the drama of ugliness is essentially the drama of denial.

The problem-drama is the true art of secularism; just as the unreality of modern ecclesiastical art is the true exponent of modern sanctity. It is only when men realise that sacred and secular things cannot be separated that they are able to laugh at them in the absurdity of their isolation; or, better still, recreate their joy afresh by reuniting them in Fiona Macleod's trinity of wonder and mystery and beauty.

14.

Between Sophocles and Shakespeare there is no real link in the chain of melodrama. Not until Purcell's time did the art of music rise to a plane of development level with the histrionic and literary feeling of the same period. But though Shakespeare was no musician (in our stupid, narrow, specialised sense of the word) he was essentially a writer of music-drama. Bernard Shaw has so clearly shown this fact that it need not be laboured now.*

Let me be content to note here that nearly all the main features of music-drama are to be found in his plays: the general religious motive, the symbolic treatment, the continuous symphonic atmosphere and the type rather than the individuality of character. These are the things which make up our English musician's (in the intelligent, broad, common sense of the word) greatness—and not his indifferent skill as a plot weaver. Indeed, his sheerly intellectual control was so uncertain that he could not always preserve his leading-motives, but wandered off, Schubert-like, into some passing emotional vein which happened to swell within him; and sometimes he allowed the physical element to predominate to such an extent that the play descended to the dramatic level of the opera. (Of this more presently.)

15.

Had Shakespeare been a mere constructor of stage conspiracies, Tolstoy's indictment would be perfectly true —Shakespeare would be a palateless ass who could not

* See, for examples, Vol. II, pages 210-11 and 276-7 of Shaw's "Dramatic Opinions."

even recognise a thistle when he ate it. "King Lear," judged as Tolstoy judges it, is a tissue of foolishness. For instance, the early relations between Lear and Cordelia have no obvious relation to the lives of King George and Princess Mary. But this is an intellectual analysis of an unintellectual kind of drama. To criticise so is as if to complain of the sun for its heat, and Tolstoy for his unimaginative old age. We can criticise the prose-dramas of Ibsen, or the "Power of Darkness" of Tolstoy himself, according to its possibility in real life, also according to the skill of its construction and the manner of withholding the dramatic climax. But to criticise Shakespeare or Sophocles or Wagner in that fashion is a big blunder.

Not even the maddest king would decide the succession by a trial of fair words. And not even the most affectionate princess would allow her father to see that she had so saline a contempt for him—especially when a third of the kingdom was at stake. But this is a cold-blooded, intellectual, realistic attitude of criticism which does the play no harm; for the simple reason that the play is not attacked by it. For, considered as types, Lear and Cordelia are perfectly true. It is a habit of persons in authority, from king to suburban father, to trust to lip-service. Official positions are such that all subordinates can only protest their fidelity—whether it be false or true. And no true subordinate but will scorn to be promoted for a pretty word, and scorn the person who expects the pretty word. Judged realistically Shakespeare is a fraud; but judged religiously (and symbolically, the inevitable language of the religious spirit) he is expressing an eternal truth clearly, forcibly and beautifully. He might have given an elaborate explanation of his meaning, and it would have been interesting, as are the postscripts of Æsop, the prose-works of Wagner or the prefaces of Bernard Shaw; but, as a matter of fact, such things add nothing to a drama and reveal nothing of it. In fact, they narrow down the vast embracing power of symbolism to a personal view of the question.

16.

I write this essay to propagate our personal view of what drama should be—to show that the drama which we like to create is the drama which everybody would want, if they could only recognise a good thing when they come across it. But I do not intend to narrow the applications of the separate dramas in which I am interested, by explaining the personal application they have to my own life.

Symbolic drama and typical character have an immense advantage over realistic drama and specialised character in that each witness of the drama is able to extract from it whatever personal and immediate meaning it may have for himself. The type is the approach to the normal. Every man is abnormal in some degree, but what is normal in him (the greater part so long as he is sane), immediately responds to the dramatic type, and what is universal in him responds to the religious idea of the piece.

Æsop, Wagner and Shaw have explained themselves, and it is all very interesting as a revelation of their own abnormal personalities and experiences. Gervinus has also explained *himself* in his "Commentaries"; but that is not quite so interesting. However, so long as these explanations remain outside the art-work we can leave them alone if we choose. But the worst of all really earnest artists is that they are haunted by a sense of their prophetic mission (Buckley and I are), and this sometimes gets into the art-work, the moral into the fable. Then the value and influence of the art-work are spoiled in proportion to the presence of the moral. For symbolic art is always greater than the artist; and the religious mood more powerful than many sermons.

Religious art (Shavian or Shakespearean) arises only in the communal spirit—in the ideals and practicalities which bind men together. The artist is the emotional and intellectual vehicle for that spirit, but in his actual life he is only a unit of it. Shaw's plays contain much

beside which he is but a commonplace individual. His Man and Superman expresses the fact that women control the world of men by force of their sex; but it does not help us, in our multitudinous experiences of that fact, to know all the artist's sociological ideas which derive from it. So also, no commentary upon "King Lear" is of any real value. Kings, millionaires, prime ministers, bishops, fathers of families—in fact, all men and women in positions of legal authority—are only able to judge of their subordinates in the most superficial way; consequently they are always making stupid mistakes like Lear. That fact, religiously presented by Shakespeare, has an individual application for us all. For me to explain it further will be but to give myself away—and I am a father.

Shakespeare's musical methods are the direct outcome of his symbolic drama. But poetry can only approximately render the emotional mood. The ostrich cannot fly despite its half-developed wings; and language cannot really *express* emotion despite the music of its vowels, the magic of its consonants, and the allusiveness of its metaphor. The religious and symbolic drama was musical in its inception; it will remain musical to the end of the chapter. The value of the intermediate period of irreligious and realistic drama is, that it has taught us not to divorce the religious drama from the facts of life.

17.

Wagner did not quite realise the value and possibilities of music-drama; but, at least, he triumphantly asserted in his prose-works the position of music-drama as distinct from opera. Nevertheless, to this day people confuse the two. Even so good a critic as Mr. Ernest Newman is always insisting that Wagner was an opera-composer. But in Mr. Newman's case it is due to that rigidity of nomenclature which the disciples of the scien-

tific method (so fluid and elusive) so artistically and paradoxically insist upon.

So long as this confusion of thought remains people will approach "Tristan" in the same frame of mind as "Rienzi"; which is as if to enter Westminster Abbey in the same frame of mind as the Alhambra. For opera is an amusement in the same way that a music-hall is amusement, and Wagner's achievement of music-drama is a divine service in the same way that the Holy Communion and the Requiem Mass are divine services.

From the æsthetic point of view, opera is a story composed for the amusement of theatre-goers who like a good proportion of music thrown in; while music-drama is a story of the symbolic type which can only be adequately expressed in the continuous emotional mood of music.

18.

There are three distinct and legitimate appeals in a drama of any kind: a physical (which includes a sensuous), an intellectual, and an emotional appeal. The physical element expresses itself in the dance and in the sensuous beauty of pageantry; and finds its most perfect realisations in the ballet and the pantomime. The intellectual element expresses itself in the words, the character-drawing and the general construction of a drama—also, to some extent, in the conscious weighing of the drama against the facts of life; it finds its most perfect realisation in the problem play. The emotional element expresses itself by appealing directly to the root of the dramatic situation in the hearts of the audience; this unconsciously evokes their sympathy for each character instead of causing them consciously to analyse the situation; it appeals, moreover, to the religious sense by showing up the difference between the true morality of the eternal feelings and the doubtful morality of the changing laws. Now the emotions are not only more

powerful than the intellect—they represent a higher state of general consciousness. The intellect is an organ of cold observation and calculation. What has lifted man so definitely above the brute world is *not* the intellect—which, as a matter of fact, is largely shared by the brute world, and in its isolated activity tends to lower man to the brute level. The emotions arise when the intellect gets into contact with those vast vague feelings of mystery and wonder and beauty. Thus my cold intellect assures me that, whether vivisection is right or wrong, it is interesting to discover what results will ensue from the removal of part of a dog's brain; but when I look in a dog's face and see his affection for human kind, my intellect becomes fertilised with the wonder and mystery of his love, and I am enabled to experience a pleasure unknown to the tiger, for instance, upon whose level I remained so long as I looked intellectually upon my victim.

19.

Not only does the development from physicality, through intellectuality, to emotionality, represent an upgrade of evolution. That of itself is a mere intellectual statement, and accordingly carries small weight. But it also represents an increase in pleasure. To dig potatoes is to experience pleasure of a low order, physical pleasure, in the mere exercise of one's limbs. The knowledge that the work has saved me threepence gives me the more sustained pleasure of the intellect. But the emotion of pride in realising my power over nature needs a symphony for its proper expression.

The superiority of intellectual drama in relation to physical drama will be readily admitted. The searching analysis of Ibsen and the genial wit of Shaw give a higher and more lasting pleasure than the ballet or the knock-about-and-tumble-down drama beloved of the rustic playgoer. What is not generally admitted is the

superiority of emotional to intellectual drama—of the economical superiority of Gluck and Wagner to Ibsen and Shaw. And yet the fact is undeniable, because of the superiority of the emotions to the intellect in pleasure-giving quality.

20.

Now the difference between opera and music-drama will easily be seen, for opera belongs to the lowest order and music-drama to the highest.

Opera sets out to amuse people, giving them plenty of movement and spectacle, with a minimum of intellectual motive, and an emotional appeal of the very crudest—often none at all; for the appeal to the emotions must not be confused with that dynamic excitement so beloved of the opera-goer. That is merely another form of physical pleasure—an appeal to those brute feelings into which there enters very little intellectual or spiritual force. Now I am not saying that this physical element is bad; on the contrary, it is splendid, and a certain proportion of it must enter into the most spiritual drama in existence. Even to celebrate the Breaking-of-Bread in the Methodist mission hall requires enough physical energy to pass round the platter. But what I do most emphatically say is, that a drama which makes of this physical element its main business, as opera does, is a drama upon the same low level as the ballet and pantomime—and, indeed, it is just these two forms of drama that the opera so often incorporates with itself.

Here is the standard recipe for an opera composer: Take an exciting story with plenty of fighting, abduction, conflagration, assassination and other kinds of excitement. While the temperature is low be content with the spoken word or the monotonous convention of recitative; but when the temperature rises, insert as many plums as possible in the shape of songs, duets, trios and choruses. If your story is so tame that the temperature rises but

seldom, you must insert your plums all the same or it will not be sweet enough for the taste of the audience.

21.

To construct a music-drama is a very different business. An opera can be written at any time. A music-drama must be waited upon, because the composer must first of all undergo a living religious experience which enables him to express the mystery of spiritual drama with clearness and conviction. The Wagner music-dramas (as Mr. Ernest Newman has truly noted in his rather unsympathetic study of the prophet) are always the expression of realities in Wagner's own inner life. We all have our religious moments, but they are generally so shallow that we do not become intoxicated and sublimated with them. So we say they are too sacred for expression. And whenever religious feeling really takes hold of a man we call him a fool and a fanatic, because he does not express himself with the insignificant vulgarity of the average supporter of the churches. The man *possessed* by a religious idea does not keep it to himself, because the strength of his feelings generally turn him into a creative artist, and he expresses himself in a psalm, or a parable, or a symphony, or (if he be capable of it) in a music-drama, which is at once psalm and symphony and parable. And inasmuch as religious feeling is always at a high temperature, there is never the need to worry as to whether the finished work is sufficiently amusing. Some low tone-values there will undoubtedly be, to carry on the thread of the drama as interpreted by the art of the stage; and the very presence of those low tones will serve to throw into relief the middle tones of moderate emotion and the high tones of passion. But these last are the essence of religious feeling and therefore of music-drama. It is only at moments of supreme passion that pure lyrical beauty thoroughly unfolds. In the opera the lyric is inserted wilfully, which is as if to

enter upon sexual relations in cold blood. In the music-drama the lyric comes as the culmination of passion. A true religious idea, such as runs through "Tristan," is bound to keep the feeling at a high level of lyric beauty. Whatever of scenic beauty, physical movement, song, trio and chorus, enter into the work will result—not from the desire to keep the senses of the audience tickled, but from the necessity of expressing the religious idea naturally and completely.

Scenic and spectacular orgies, as such, have no place in music-drama, but beauty of scene and physical movement will be used when they help to further the religious idea of the work—with vocal aid, as in the Grail Ceremonial or in Klingsor's Gardens, or without vocal aid as in Siegfried's Funeral Procession. No concerted vocal music will be used for the sake of variety—variety can be had at the Alhambra and its like—but if a moment should occur when two lovers lie heart to heart, as in "Tristan," or a number of beings are united in common aim, as the Valkyries are, then duet or chorus becomes a dramatic necessity.

22.

All this subordination of the physical and sensuous dramatic appeal was thoroughly realised by Wagner. What he did *not* thoroughly understand was the equal necessity for the subordination of the intellectual appeal, if music-drama is to reach that spiritual plane which music demands for its due development. Wagner's religious desire to lift the musical play from the rut of mere art and get along the road of real life, caused him to enter very frequently upon that domain of pure intellectualism which finds a fitter medium in the problem play and in prose. Then he becomes insufferably tedious, because he leaves the domain where real music is possible. The music-drama will not drag so long as it remains within its own spiritual domain: thus, the religious con-

nection between love and death is worked out in the second act of "Tristan" without a moment's dullness; but directly Mark discusses sex-morality and friendship from the intellectual and personal point of view the act goes to pieces. The dispute between Wotan and Fricka in Act II of the "Valkyries" brings about the same effect of dragging. It may be said that these musically dull portions are necessary if the development of the drama is to be clearly shown. And that is true, as Wagner's dramas stand. But none the less it is a weakness from the point of view of music-drama; for it will always be found that these dull patches deal with Wagner's subject from the intellectual point of view, and not on the spiritual plane which we have already found to be essential in music-drama.

Although in his art-works Wagner frequently commits himself to argument and discussion, in his prose works he constantly recognises that such intellectual activity is a mistake in music-drama. The real music-drama is the drama which remains consistently upon the religious and spiritual plane, *using* the physical, intellectual and emotional appeals by means of all necessary stage symbols.

Of all Wagner's works "Tristan" and "Parsifal" most completely succeed. And they are instinctively recognised as his most perfect works. But the reason given is a purely operatic reason—that they are most continually symphonic and lyrical. That symphonic-lyrical quality is not the *cause* of their greater perfection—it is the inevitable *effect* of those dramas remaining more continuously upon that spiritual plane which finds in music its purest and loveliest interpretation.

23.

But because (notably in the "Ring") Wagner did not thoroughly succeed in divesting himself of the analytical, argumentative methods of the prose-drama, and is, therefore, frequently forced to sink his spiritual drama to the

lower level of the problem-play, where music becomes useless and inconvenient—because of this flaw in his work, a very curious misunderstanding has occurred. The very mistake made by Wagner has been accepted as the cue for possible developments in music-drama; and the real success achieved by Wagner (in subordinating stage realism to musical spiritualism) has been ignored.

Certain funny people argue as follows: Wagner said that opera was bad art because music (the means) had been made an end, while drama (the end) had been made a means; but Wagner himself frequently stops the stage-action that he may develop the music; therefore he makes the same mistake made by the opera composers.

These funny people do not see the difference between *stopping* the thread of a physical or intellectual play to indulge in a little music, and *carrying on* the thread of a spiritual play by means of music. These funny people have minds of the antiquarian type. They are constitutionally unable to believe that the drama of the future can be essentially different from the drama of the immediate past. During the recent centuries the physical and intellectual elements have predominated in drama; therefore, say they, the thing will be no drama wherein those elements do not predominate. If you want music, you have symphonies, chamber music, songs and operas—if you can endure the degradation of the drama inevitable in opera. As for us, who love the drama, we will use music to increase the emotional effect where necessary, but we will not have it impeding the progress of our action and dialogue.

24.

The most noteworthy development of this anti-quarianism may be observed in Debussy's "Pelleas and Melisande." Mr. Gilman, the most notable English writing disciple of Debussy, very truly calls his method "the underlining of the drama by means of music." It is

an interesting, though old-fashioned bit of work; but, judged as drama, it has actually spoiled the beautiful, delicate play of Maeterlinck.

"Pelleas and Melisande" was born in that pure musical mood which Schiller said preceded his creative work. A composer who could by accident fall into the identical mood, or by long living with the mood make it his own, could give "Pelleas" its true music—a music which would bring out of it all the divine lyrical beauty which Maeterlinck could only hint at by reason of the tiresome medium of words. But Debussy has not done that; he has merely crawled after those words in all their grovelling feebleness. It is a very atavistic sort of musical play where the spiritual art whispers, whimpers and writhes beneath the realistic and grosser art of play-making.

To accept Debussy at his own valuation, he has made, not a music-drama, nor even an opera, but an interesting illuminated manuscript in true antiquarian style. It has the exclusive and remote atmosphere of a thirteenth century missal, but it has neither the beauty of musical art, nor the living reality of a sincere drama. So much for the underlining of the drama by means of music!

25.

The reason of Wagner's incomplete success was not, as so many of his critics say, that he was too great a musician to write dramas. The exact reverse is the case—he was not sufficiently consecutive a musical thinker to write music-dramas. He gave us a taste of them, but his frequent reversion to the intellectual attitude of the prose-drama effectually prevented him from achieving thoroughly what he set out to do. Brought up, as he was, in the atmosphere of the secular theatre, he could not be expected to realise what the old Greeks knew so well, and some modern churches still have a faint conception of—the atmosphere of the "Mass." Therefore, it was that he

missed the significance of the most important factor of all in music-drama—the significance of the chorus.

Now inasmuch as the choral element in our work was not deliberately thought out, but came upon us unawares, I will first describe its coming and theorise upon it afterwards.

Towards the end of my studies at the R.C.M. I read Tolstoy's "What is Art?" From that time I became convinced that all true art is the expression of what Tolstoy calls the religious perception. I saw that the art of the actor was, of all the arts, the most powerful for influence; and I believed that it was Wagner who, by joint means of the stage and my own particular art of music, had most clearly expressed the religious perception of to-day. But the Wagnerian drama lacks just that channel of musical expression which is absolutely necessary to the English people—the channel of the chorus. I have only recently realised how significant that choral element is. At the time of which I am speaking I merely missed a vast expressional power to which I had been accustomed. So I laid out a fourteen-day epic drama (conceived and commenced long before) on the subject of Jesus Christ, on the following lines: A very small stage was to be erected in the centre of a large orchestra; on the stage were to be depicted the various scenes from Christ's life in the style of Wagnerian drama; and then the application of these scenes to the modern life (following Tolstoy's "Harmony of the Gospels") was to be expressed by soloists and chorus in the form of English oratorio. But, inasmuch as I intended the execution of this to be the crowning work of my life, I deferred the execution until maturity. In the meantime I wrote a sort of autobiographical opera, following out my faith that the true artist is he who expresses only that which he has really lived and deeply felt. Then, to try and make a reputation, I followed the line of least resistance, composing a number of orchestral pieces, choruses and songs; and there was a vast spoiling of paper in the writing of books and articles, of little value to anyone else, but very valuable to me in that they made me think for myself, whereas hitherto I had accepted other people's opinions. The most

important of these was a treatise on "Music and Democracy," by means of which I became aware of the truly popular nature of all the greatest art, and of the fact that the greatest artists acquire their superhuman power by acting as the expression of the oversoul of a people. Then I understood why Wagner had chosen those folk-subjects which had been produced by that oversoul. A cycle of Arthurian dramas, in imitation of the "Ring of the Niblungs," was planned as the outcome of this. But there was little time to execute any of these large plans, as my days were occupied in music-copying and teaching, and my nights in a theatre orchestra. From this grind I was rescued by Granville Bantock, and shortly afterwards two little choral jokes of mine made a hit at the Leeds Festival. Then occurred a telepathic coincidence: I was offered a cycle of poems for music-dramas on Arthurian subjects. These had first been sent by the author, Reginald Buckley, to Sir Edward Elgar, who (bless him!) refused them. Then they had been offered to Bantock; and he advised Buckley to send them to me.

These poems were planned for Wagnerian treatment—the passages for purely musical development being represented by what Buckley called a verbal orchestra—and the whole thing was so musically suggestive that I jumped at it. But when I came face to face with the composition of them I found that while they were exquisitely musical, they had very little relation to life and human character—in short, that they were not dramatic. On my pointing out certain things to my poet, he accepted some of them; but others he fought me upon tooth and nail, so that I was forced to the alternative of accepting his exquisite musical lie, or of forcibly altering, omitting and adding to the libretto so that the characters might behave like the men and women round me and not like the beautiful creatures of romance. I chose the latter alternative. And even now that the first drama is all but complete the fight goes on. Buckley wants me to dress his pretty dolls, and I want to put the men and women I meet every day into his beautiful music. So that this collaboration takes place under the most favourable conditions: the poet writes the music, the musician writes the drama. For me to

compose music to his words needs no ability, only sympathy. All the beauty of the final result is his; while I am responsible for the skeleton of the thing.

But another thing: when I came to those passages which he intended as a mere indication of the musical mood—and full of a new poetic technique—the translation of the Wagnerian leading motive to the art of words—it seemed to me as wanton a shame to banish their loveliness and suggestiveness from the dramatic performance, as it would be to strike out all the most beautiful of the Shakespearean speeches. Then I bethought me of my Christ-drama with its chorus—and the thing was settled: we would have a chorus outside the stage commenting, elucidating, pointing the climaxes, and expressing that mighty spirit which can only be found in the mass of humanity.

Now let me justify this procedure.

26.

The drama itself was choral in its origin. The mass-atmosphere is one of the great and precious splendours of Greek drama; and the same atmosphere is preserved in the most important dramatic celebration in the churches—the Mass!

But though this mass-quantity is the origin and spiritual binding power of the drama, it is not drama in itself—it is feeling. Hence the necessity of individuality to emerge from this mass. The history of the primitive drama is as the history of a primitive people, and consists in the production of heroes. But, later, in the intermediate stage, the drama is resolved into the mere clash of individuality without the mass-background; as the intermediate history of peoples is resolved into the mere clash of royal bullies and cunning statesmen. In this middle period there is neither people nor hero; there are only mobs (numbers without the mass-spirit) and rulers. Such middle stage (the nineteenth century, for

instance) is incapable of producing, even as an ideal, any Achilles or Rama or Brynhild or Lancelot.

That is because, in social conditions such as those of the nineteenth century, individuality is only the splitting up of a spiritless mass into uninteresting units. The production of a hero can only come about in the unity of a people; and that unity is only possible when an individuality recognises his responsible relation to his fellow men, because of the power he derives in communion with them. In the middle stage of life and drama this mass-feeling and sense of responsibility are lacking During such period the principal characters appear of greater relative strength; actually they are of less. Men can be despicably mean in relation to individuals; they can only be heroically great in relation to the mass-peoples. In the days of his true greatness, as saviour of revolution, Napoleon stands out as representative of a very considerable mass-movement; and comes to musical expression in Beethoven's "Heroic" Symphony. But as lonely emperor, he is a contemptibly mean and trivial figure by the side of Sigurd, Arthur, Prometheus or Christ, who all of them are the direct production of mass-feeling. This, I think, fully shows that the greatest drama must arise when the conception of the hero places him in strong sympathetic relation to the mass out of which he grows; and not later, when, as in the drama of developed civilisation (your true prose-drama), the idea of individuality dwindles into an idea of nonentity—into the paltriness of each mob-unit, and no mass-feeling at all. Compare the dramas of the heroes I have mentioned with the historical plays of Shakespeare and the individualistic studies of Ibsen. In these latter there are occasional hints of mass-feeling. Ibsen's Stranger in the "Lady from the Sea" and Rat-Wife in "Little Eyolf" are hints of those vast powers which are larger than individualities. But these individualistic dramas contain no Sigurd, no Prometheus. But when Napoleon is treated (as, for instance, in Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts") the mass-feeling is so obvious that there is nothing for it but to use a Gothic version of the Greek chorus. Truly each individuality shall contain

the germs of heroic personality; but that cannot be developed in a life or in a drama, of petty characters. It is the instinctive feeling for this truth which causes dramatists to deal so largely with gods, kings and prophets instead of grocers, rag-men and village parsons. Such men have their drama, and presented as Ibsen presents it, it becomes interesting; but they can never stand as *types*—and, as we have already seen, a drama to be of real religious value, must present its characters on the typical or heroic scale with the heroic background of the mass, so that we may recognise the feelings and conditions to which we are all subject. You cannot place individuality in a sociologically air-tight compartment, if it is to remain typical. Christ feeding the ten thousand may suggest to us that King George might find his kingship in a like service, and that feeling will react on the whole of the people who call him king; but the charitable spinster feeding the man with one arm and a cork leg has only a message for spinsters who happen to receive calls from one-armed, cork-legged paupers.

Great and typical characters can only grow upon a great field. Such a field is afforded in the mass-feeling of the Greek chorus. There we see kings, high priests, rebels, slaves, ascetics, voluptuaries and other types of character in true life-conditions. In the realistic drama such characters occupy the whole of a very small ground; in the symbolic drama they occupy a part only of a very large ground. That is the true position of strong characters in life. Strong as they are, they act upon and are acted upon by the mass. To cut off the mass-feeling in drama, is to keep your Christ forever in the wilderness—not to grow strong in his individuality, but to grow mean and narrow for lack of association with humanity.

27.

In the Greek drama the chorus had two distinct functions: to create the right emotional atmosphere, and to assist forward the story wherever the psychology of the

crowd was needed in the development of the dramatic idea. Neither of these functions was properly developed by Wagner.

The first was almost entirely relegated by him to the orchestra; the second appears only fitfully, except in "Rienzi" and the "Mastersingers."

In our work the presence of the chorus upon the stage will undergo considerable development. Sometimes it will serve as symbolic representative of mental and natural powers, like to the Chorus of Furies symbolising the agonised conscience of Orestes in Gluck's "Iphigenia in Tauris." The Chorus of Storm-Spirits at the end of the first act of "Uther and Igraine" is another such: it symbolises the forces of nature in obedience to the man of science. But more often the stage-chorus will be used to show the interaction of the individual characters and the mass-peoples. This is a dramatic factor which Wagner actually utilised in "Rienzi," and then sacrificed, except in the "Mastersingers," foregoing the dramatic use of it because of its absurd use by the opera-composers for the sake of sheer physical climax. Now even that physical climax may have its value, provided it be not used for its own sake. We do not intend to forego that, or even of the ballet, when it helps in the exposition of the dramatic idea. But more important than these in a national festival drama is the mass-feeling of the chorus —the sense that the nation is gaining expression as well in the whole as in its more outstanding details of typical individuality; and for Wagner to sacrifice that mass-expression, using the chorus for little but processions and forms of ritual, is a sheer loss, not only of medium, but of dramatic breadth also. For in the mass of peoples there is an oversoul quite distinct from the quantity of its individuals, even as the mass of trees we call a forest gives a feeling, not only nor chiefly of a number of trees massed, but a feeling of mystery and solemnity of which the single tree has no suggestion. To attempt a national festival drama and omit the nation is leaving out the main dramatic factor with a vengeance. But that is actually what Wagner did, except in the "Mastersingers." However, it is not without significance that in "Parsifal"

not only are the ceremonial choruses much more important, but in the chorus of Flower Maidens there is a properly developed example of stage chorus, half symbolic as representing the lust of the flesh, half dramatic as representing the worldly charm which Parsifal has to face and reject before he is fit for his sovereignty. How dramatically true that chorus stands may be noted from the fact that after Parsifal has rejected a whole harem of loveliness, he has yet to conquer the seductions of the individual. The male always feels with the hero of "The Beggar's Opera," how happy could I be with either! That human conception has been followed by Wagner; but it is diametrically opposed to an operatic treatment which would have brought in the Flower Maidens *afterwards* for the sake of physical climax.

28.

But it is in the use of an orchestral chorus as complementary to Wagner's choral orchestra that our work presents difficulties. As a theatre will have to be built for a proper performance of our works, it is but just that we should show the artistic necessity of the thing.*

The outstanding reason for this orchestral chorus is to give expression to that national mass-feeling to which I have already alluded. Although the chorus will find its place on the stage as a dramatic necessity, while it remains there as an objective factor in the development of the idea it can never give a convincing subjective expression to the extent which is necessary if the hearts of the onlookers themselves are to be drawn into the play. No drama laying any claim to an intellectual, much more an emotional and religious value, can be regarded objectively from beginning to end; the onlookers' minds are bound to weigh, compare and reflect upon the ideas and to give to them various personal applications. This use of the

* In the meantime, it can only come to life as a choral work.

chorus, common to Greek drama at its best, was absolutely lost sight of by Wagner except upon its lowest level of sensuous feeling and mid-level of memory. His choral orchestra serves to arouse sympathy and his development of the leading motives helps the memory and suggests subtle indications of character-mood which could not be expressed by words; but it in no way appeals to the higher centres of the mind where feeling crystallises into thought, and emotion, and the vague sense of universal consciousness becomes fused with the clear-cut direct personal interest in that universal consciousness. A child knows the god in the tree; later he knows the tree, but doubts the god; but finally he recognises the truth of his earliest feeling, with this difference—that the god in the tree has become one with his own mind. So primitive drama appeals to the sense of wonder in life, in its next development it presents life without wonder; but in its highest development it presents life as the mirror of the onlookers' truest, deepest, common interest—that is to say, the early drama of faith *plus* the later drama of scepticism *plus* that immediate general interest we call love. And this mass-development can only (so far as I can see) finds its expression by a large medium standing outside the stage-movement. For all stage-movement is itself an expression of an impersonal thing and has no necessary application to our own lives. The choral orchestra of Wagner has for its function the sense-expression of the primitive wonder; but only our orchestral chorus can link-on the feeling and the action to minds of the audience, and join them in the feeling that the drama is their own, both individually and as a joyously united body. The congregational chorales in Bach's "Passions" afford an elementary example of such a chorus; and it is well known that the Greek drama acted as the very heart's core of the national life. The latter fact was due in some degree to the national myths, but clearly also to the fact that by means of the chorus the people were bound heart to heart in an immediate act of religious worship. They felt as personal and common an interest in the drama as the true-hearted congregation feels in the celebration of the Last Supper. And if the Greek drama could so appeal to a little people living under the peculiar parochial

conditions of paganism, what power may not open up for a modern drama of like kind, when a whole continent is but waiting the sign to be banded together in the symbols of a similar faith?

29.

Some advantages of lesser importance are also to be derived from this orchestral chorus.

There are certain occasions when the dramatic idea of a religious subject (into which a large amount of mystery necessarily enters) cannot be developed either by a stage chorus or by the characters or by the orchestra. An example is to be found in "Uther and Igraine." At the change of scene in the first act we need to know the mighty will-power, which, acting in storm and thunder of human emotion, brings the hero to birth. Merlin cannot express it, for he, as a man of science, cannot explain more than he knows; the orchestra cannot achieve more than a vague feeling of it; but the orchestral chorus makes it absolutely clear, by uniting to the sensuous orchestral appeal, the appeal to the definite understanding of the intellect, and suggesting, by very force of its own massed being, that idea of mighty conflict which is necessary to an understanding of the value of a character like Uther. Without that divine pushing power behind him Uther would be half tiger, half sensualist. The chorus reveals the value of the tiger and the sensualist in the divine economy of life. It prevents us, moreover, from regarding Merlin as a *magus ex machina*, by showing the limit of his power and suggesting the limitlessness of the power behind him.

Another distinct gain is in the ability to direct the atmospheric appeal of the orchestral preludes. No artist, from Wagner downward, has hesitated to demand of an art-work that it should be self-complete. But take the prelude to "Parsifal": Does not the mind ask questions? Some people will tell us that in pure music the intellect should be quiescent. But that is only possible to a child

who has not yet developed much of an intellect. As a matter of fact, until the intellect has sufficiently grown the very power to concentrate on a piece of music is lacking. And while it is true that people in a mid-stage of mental development attach too great an importance to the intellect, it is equally true that people in the highest stage of development do not strive to annihilate it, but to correlate it with the other mental powers: to fuse them together in that perfect understanding conceived by Dante, wherein all *effort* of will and intellect ceased, even while they continued in ecstatic activity.* Now in hearing a Wagner prelude the intellect is too active, inasmuch as it is being continually stimulated by the orchestra; but it has no real nourishment and, consequently, is inclined to imagine vain things. But our preludes (and where necessary our interludes) *do* offer nourishment because they are choral as well. Thus, Buckley's "Lake of Wonder" prelude in "Uther and Igraine" offers words which are so intellectually suggestive, without being analytical or obscure, that the will and intellect of the audience are actually in full activity throughout, and that without the slightest degree of effort.

There are many other advantages accruing from the use of this orchestral chorus and more will arise in the future as we develop the work now begun. The gain to dramatic technique is large, as, for instance, in the fact that the audience can be made aware of the entry of Merlin in Act II, notwithstanding the darkness. Anyone who has been bothered with the first part of the second act of "Lohengrin" will appreciate this. And, again, in the fact that Merlin's voice shall penetrate through the storm-clatter, being reinforced from behind the scenes by the male chorus in unison, without adapting the fury of the storm to the exigencies of his vocal organ.

However, such technical points concern no one but the authors. The outstanding value of the orchestral chorus to the public is that by its means they themselves enter into the art-work. The choral singing which is the chief glory

* See Samuel Butler's "Life and Habit"; and "Unconscious Memory."

of British music, and the love of pageantry which is now so happily reviving, find their inevitable union and climax in such a work as ours.

Choral drama will succeed where Ibsen failed because of the sacrilege of serious art without beauty. Choral drama will succeed where Wagner failed because of use of stage-plot and problem-talk, and because of his fruitless excitement of the intellect. Choral drama will succeed where Shakespeare failed for lack of tone-stuff and mass-feeling. Choral drama will succeed where the churches fail for lack of contact with life as it is lived. Choral drama will complete a cycle by linking-on with the great Greek drama, succeeding where *it* failed for lack of the developed art of music, and for lack of the developed sense of unity among the nations, and for lack of the sense of the divinity of humanity which did not enter into Greek feeling until the drama began to degenerate as art at the hands of Euripides.

30.

It may be well to say a few words of "Uther and Igraine" as it shall be presented when I control the production. Buckley will probably present it somewhat differently; Gordon Craig, for instance, differently again. For it is no part of our plan to institute a traditional rendering. On the contrary, I hope our dramas will never be produced twice in the same way—they *cannot* be if they are to express the actual feelings and ideas of the producers in regard to the subjects of the dramas.

The curtain will rise, with the first bar of the prelude, upon a scene of vagueness—a lake surrounded by high mountains, but the whole enveloped in opal mist, and nothing clearly seen. From time to time dark shadows pass over, alternating with rays of vari-coloured light. Now and again a strange, mysterious, silent white craft will sail over the lake and perhaps a large bird-like creature will fly across. At the word: "Strike through

the mist, O sun, and give us day," the scene will quickly change to a typical English country lane on a summer forenoon, with every leaf ablaze with sunlight. Threats as of coming thunder gradually turn the living light to dead sultriness, showing how Uther's character is affected by natural phenomena as sensitively as the feeling of animals. The storm-chorus takes place during another change of scene and leads to Merlin's invocation to the forces of the storm. The scene is a mountain top and the whole mountain and air are alive with storm-spirits—creatures in bright bronze and steely blue. This scene is first revealed only by vivid lightning flashes; later, by the continuous gloomy light of the torch held by Ulfius. During the whole progress of this scene the storm-spirits perform angry movements according to the suggestions of the music.

The prelude to Act II will be reinforced by a picture of Tintagel Castle from without, if the stage manager can change it quickly enough for me; failing that, a drop-scene. The second act itself is Tintagel Castle from within—Igraine's chamber, lit only by the fire-glow and the moonlight streaming through a fair-sized glazeless aperture—purple the only colour, silver the only metal—severe in its richness, the only noticeable objects a few astrological instruments. The fire-glow dies down before Merlin's entry, so that his first words issue from the absolute darkness of the doorway.

The final chorus takes place in an increasing glow of red passing slowly to the grey of dawn. During the last pages, with their allusion to the first prelude, the purple curtains are withdrawn, if possible with the following effect: On this side of the curtain nothing but the flickering torch; beyond it pitch darkness—slowly becoming opalescent with a dim vision of Montsalvat—no ultra-spiritual or cloistral vision, but a scene of fully active life, with young men and maidens clad in white passing by and casting red roses toward the chamber of Uther and Igraine, warriors in crimson saluting with their swords, mothers (of Igraine's rather intellectual type) passing with their children, sages with their parchments, and,

finally, as the vision grows dim, a man holding in one hand a crown of laurel, in the other a crown of thorn.

31.

Such a work as the one I have outlined proceeds from Wagner, but passes far beyond him—even as our work will be passed by the artists who have the wit to accept it and develop it beyond our visionary capacity.

Visionary! That is a term of contempt for the dreamer. Well, we are dreamers. That is undeniable. But without dreams nothing can be *done*. Buckley has made the keynote of this cycle of dramas:

First to Dream
And then to Do.

That applies to our life-work as it issues from these dramas. Wagner's festival dramas necessitated the building of Bayreuth theatre. Our dramas necessitate the building of a place which Buckley has fitly forenamed the Temple Theatre. That theatre we are intent on making the centre of a commune. There have been many communes and they have failed—for lack of a religious centre. Our theatre supplies that. It shall grow out of the municipal life of some civically conscious place if we can get such a place to co-operate with us. Failing that, a new city shall grow around the theatre.

Following this is an outline of the main articles of what we propose to do. We want to avoid specialised artists just as we want to avoid specialised ploughmen, because we believe that real art can only grow out of real life, and happy life is only possible in activities which involve the artistic faculties.

Of course, there are difficulties in the way—and difficulties so considerable that only the practical artist-mind can be expected to overcome them—but the point is that the way exists—to overcome the difficulties will make our work all the jollier In the meantime, any millionaire who

wants to perpetuate an insignificant name can do no better than let us know to what extent he is prepared to support us. (See articles at end of this essay.)

One evening, after I had been explaining our scheme to some friends, we chanced (or we coincidenced) to light upon the following words of Carlyle:

"Two men I honour, and no third. First the toil-worn craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasably royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a god-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted it must stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour: and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on: *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

"A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the bread of Life. Is not he too in his duty; endeavouring towards inwards Harmony; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low? Highest of all, when his outward and his inward endeavours are one: when we can name him Artist; not earthly craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us! If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality? These two, in all their degrees, I honour: all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth."

Well, it is an essential part of our scheme to unite these two honourable men; allowing the workman room to develop his soul in art, and the artist to develop his body in contact with the ground-facts of existence. Thus shall we accept the responsibility which Tolstoy (in his "What is Art?") so clearly proves to rest upon the artist under present commercial conditions, without blaspheming, as Tolstoy does, the divine power of Beauty.

THE GROWTH OF DREAMS.

THE GROWTH OF DREAMS.

By REGINALD R. BUCKLEY.

IF every writer set forth the tale of his book's growth, from the first glimmering idea till that moment, half joy, half pain, when a new dream has come to birth, we should learn as much from the explanation as from the work itself. Nay, more! For we should discover at once whether it sprang from joyful faith, or whether, like a crafty spider, the writer spread his web for buzzing flies.

Why take the trouble to explain anything? I can hear the reader protest that if I have written good poetry, he is content to enjoy: that great art is simple, and that Shakespeare needs no explanation. To this I reply that the simpler a thing may be, the less trouble people take to understand it, and that the only lights that need no bushel are the artificial ones. No man uses a microscope to look at the sun.

A casual reader of "Uther and Igraine" might say: "The drama has no true plot, the verse is so crude that it is nothing more than plain description of natural things. It bears no trace of complex scholarship, nor is Uther a labour leader, nor Igraine a suffragette. You have not given us a book of yesterday, and have withheld from us to-day and the day-after-to-morrow!"

To which I answer that I have not written the book! Years ago I wrote one, and the force of events, beyond my control, have composed a choral drama, of which "Uther and Igraine" is the beginning. Before you can

make head or tail of it, I must tell you what must be told in due course to actors and singers. This is not a paper drama, nor a house of cards, but, like all dramatic work, a carefully laid fire, to which light must be brought before any comfort can be expected.

The circumstances of my life led me away from definite scholarship on the one hand, and from journalism, on the other. I could not help writing, so spent my time in contributing to more or less obscure journals, and founding, and helping to founder, a small amateur paper, in which I was allowed enough rope to hang myself.

I began an enormous novel, the first part dealing with a previous incarnation, the second with the present day, and the third with the future state.

Not content with this, I invented a kind of free verse, and believe that, if my life be spared, I may one day be able to understand what was written.

The atmosphere of the home, in those early days, was so far political that even this nonsense had a basis in the life of real people. I had to work hard at exams. and daily routine, but managed to write a pastoral (unpublished) and a collection of poems, with an introduction on Free Melody, which was published, and served to mystify a number of people.

At this point I saw my first opera. Through my parents, I had an intense horror of mere singing, and cared nothing for the tragedy that culminates in a top-note, and resented the bad taste which permits a corpse to receive bouquets from those who have just gloated over her death.

But Wagner's "Tannhäuser" revealed to me a world undreamed of, and I fastened eagerly upon his "Prose Writings" and, through them, was led to a study of Greek art.

The works of Ruskin burned in my veins, together with the keenest interest in the world of action. I loved the art of the pen, and was ready to do something.

Having read how Milton had contemplated an Arthurian epic; how Shakespeare had conned Arthurian chronicles; how Dante knew of the French romances; I admired the foresight and reticence of these men in

leaving well alone. Tennyson's "Memoirs" showed that he, too, had thought of a musical work on these legends, before publishing the "Idylls." I understood the reason —that the music of their day could not have entered into union with their poetry, but that, through Wagner, the way had become clear.

A great dream was born within me to make these national scriptures the quarry from which to hew a huge music-drama on the lines of Wagner's "Ring," with Merlin as Britain's Isaiah, Galahad her Parsifal, Arthur her type of manhood. Amid all the talk of "super-men," in an age of philosophic and artistic healers and quacks, I longed for a dramatic and poetic art, wherein the sane, healthy England might bathe, as in the pure, rhythmic sea of Cornwall, loved by all flaming souls, from the Table Round till now.

That was before Elgar had won acceptance in music, before the revival, emphasised in the theatre world by the enterprise of the Court and the Manchester Gaiety, and, seeing that I knew neither composer nor theatrical manager of influence, my task might have appeared hopeless.

Alone I worked, putting aside all else, my good mother thinking me a little mad, a Peer Gynt weaving his own crown of straw! But, unlike Ase, she helped me through, praying that out of all this toil some good might come!

In a word, I wrote four poems, showing forth the coming of the Hero, his Manhood, the Quest of the Grail and the ultimate fading away of those glorious days, deeming that their production as popular works of art would move men to the passionate desire of my own heart, that Britain shall become again a joyful garden, a fruitful field for labour, the home of all manly toil, and the armed and sea-girt hero-land, as long ago.

I prefaced the action by preludes, welding it together with the interludes of my verbal orchestra.

Then, like a seaman, I scanned the horizon, hoping that somewhere a composer might be tacking slowly to Avalon, rather than sail with the majority, with the wind and tide of vanity and low success.

Happening to read of Granville Bantock's broad,

modern sympathies, I wrote to him, and an interview was granted. At once alive to the importance of the idea, seeing that, were I a great fool, this scheme was not the fruit of a *small* and circumspect mind, he gave me encouragement and read the work. Though not in full sympathy with my aims, to his honour let it be said that he gave me hope when another would have crushed my spirit for ever.

Some months later he wrote to me, recommending that the work should be sent to Rutland Boughton, whose Choral Variations had met with great success at the Leeds Musical Festival. I sent the MS. to Mr. Boughton, who replied that he had been for some time working at a serial music-drama on the same lines, and, as collaboration seemed unlikely, he asked for permission to read my poems, on the understanding that, with me or without, his project would go forward.

I agreed to this, and he began to read at the beginning of act two, "Uther and Igraine." "My dear brother in art," his next letter began, "I must have your work."

I went to see him at his home, near Birmingham. The composition had begun. We talked the whole thing over and compared notes. He, too, had formed his artistic convictions, in contact with reality. As musical critic, as writer of a monograph on "Bach," as a worker in the theatre and the school of music, it was as a human being, not as an academe, that he approached the task of composition. Wagner, Ruskin and Turner, with the Greek masters, were his text-books, and the composer's work in the world that of the old bards.

Where he differed from my conception of the true music-drama, it is for him to speak. Let me add merely that, in his belief in the dramatic possibilities of choral England, he carried me with him, after a struggle.

He was in accord with my theories as to verse, as expressed in the poems and my writings.

The poet's work is to conceive a dominant idea, then to imagine a pictorial and natural setting for it. Having no regard at all for set forms, but filled with hatred for slovenly work, he should attempt to put into rhythmic expression the passions and ideas of the characters, in-

dissolubly joined with the music that surges in Nature. I do not believe in moralising, by analogy, from Nature, but no man can be blind to the green life of the field, the gnarled strength of the forest, the everlasting struggle between the passionate sea and the calm majesty of the rocks. The modern drawing-room is a natural enough setting for the trivial and the faithless in life. So, equally, is the cosmic strength of elemental things for those primal feelings which alone it is the business of the artist to express.

We had some experience of this. When beginning to write "Uther," I had gone down to Tintagel. There, away from distraction, it was easy to simplify the drama, casting away as useless all save the few words needed to symbolise the simple things, those primal, organic feelings music can utter to the full, when aided by poetry, that gives definite meaning to what otherwise would be vague. A composer can give us a symphonic work full of noise and terror. The poet alone can show us whether the storm and stress is the hour of battle, the end of the world, or a tempest on sea or land.

Again, some months after the composition was begun, we went down to Cornwall together by the night express, in a torrent of rain that made my friend a study of the artistic temperament below zero.

But when at last we were among the hills, the sun drove away all shadows. For a few days we lived among our heroes, plunging into the sea and striding over the turf.

Thus the second stage was reached, and the reader may see from this narrative how the whole conception grew, not from the caprice of this poet or that composer, but from the birth in two minds of similar works, which have re-acted the one upon the other, till the drama has become a collaboration in the true sense. What you will read is not the word-book of a musical setting, but the drama set out in words, to be acted and sung, by a reader in study or by the sea; by chorus and orchestra in the concert-room; or with the aid of word, tone and scene in the theatre.

I have said that "Uther and Igraine" is the first of several choral dramas, each complete in itself, but all form-

ing parts of an attempt to bring about a revival of our national legends in which the people express and behold them, alive in the thought and feeling of to-day. We do not seek to exhume the *body* of Arthur, but to bring the *soul* of him into modern life, till the Arthurian spirit become as potent a factor in the people's life as a budget or an education bill.

This view of art is wider than our immediate subject, so I will make two digressions. A short cut is the best way of missing as much as possible between two given points. A digression may lead you up a blind alley, or cause you to discover the South Pole on your journey to the Equator. First, let us go to the Faeryland, returning to Cornwall by way of London, Glasgow and Manchester.

The main difference between a child and a man is that the former cannot be cheated, while the latter deceives both himself and his neighbours.

Humpty-Dumpty makes his impression, not by a fatuous witticism, but by a great and glorious catastrophe. So does Macbeth. I know a little girl who had read "Alice," and has come to associate the adventures in the book with her own life in her father's garden. Her father is Rutland Boughton, so the allusion has a singular appropriateness.

The adventures of Jack and Jill, of the Giant Killer, are the child's counterpart of the tales of Tristan and Isolde and of Siegfried. The obvious difference is that the youngster's legend springs from the wonder and surprise of events no longer wonderful to us.

So we must bathe in the Lake of Wonder till all our grown-up faults, our varied interests and amazing culture, may be set aside. For, like the kingdom of heaven, the realm of art may be entered only with the faith of children.

When we have cast aside our business or our chatter, what does life hold for us amid its shadows and silences?

Before entering the Gate of the Future we must wash away the dust of travel.

Then, in our hearts, perhaps, we hear the rhythm of Beethoven, surging in god-like striving.

Looking up, we see Watts's pictures—"Life and Love," "Love and Death," the "Triumph of Life" or "Whence? Whither?"

These are great symphonies of colour, save the last, which is smaller, though, in some ways, the greatest picture in the world. But, are they complex and very large—these symphonies?

No, they are deep and simple.

How did Angelo conquer the rocks?

With a scalpel? Or a graver's tool?

No, we should not have heeded him, the marble would have remained as cold as any other stone. With the chisel, the strong arm and the sword of faith striking them, like Moses, till not only water, but flesh and blood came out of them! And Wagner?

From "Tannhäuser," wherein love triumphs over sense; through the "Mastersingers," among whom a free art is uplifted amid the popular revels of a holiday crowd; through "Tristan and Isolde," in whom the passion of day sinks into the eternal realm of night; to "Parsifal," in whose power a world's pain is stilled and faith lives; there beat the wings of the soul, sweeping upward and onward.

These we have. The curtain is half drawn back, and we see the flame burning on the Altar of Life. The Harp, the Pen, the Chisel and the Brush are there, standing beside the tragic, faery symbol that surmounts the whole.

And, through these, what expression have we in the popular art, the art of the theatre; what in poetry and music of the faery lore of our own heroes and the life of our own people? In poetry, considered as a separate art, there is much. In music, the life of the soul finds a full expression in Elgar's great work, and in that of Bantock, to name but two—the one viewing life as a churchman, the other as a mystic in the world of sense.

Looking at the forward movement in the theatre, it is different, and here lies the whole object of this essay. Barrie has given us "Peter Pan" and "The Admirable Crichton," both awakening the imaginative spirit, combined in the latter with clear social sympathies.

Shaw has tackled the deep problems of life as an Irishman of an extreme type, his keen thought striking sparks of wit as he forges a two-edged sword.

Yeats, equally characteristic of his race, is full of the wonder and mystery of life, but his art is bound up with the shadowland of an Ireland that finds no kinship with the enormous, if misplaced, energies of modern Britain.

Taking these as types of the various phases of the modern revival, and leaving the spoken drama, Gilbert Murray's translations (or re-creations) of Greek plays come nearest to that kind of art, which seems to us a great need, even a demand. To this day they interest by the sheer force of their representative character, the action and re-action of protagonists and people, the chorus standing between audience and player, linking, by commentary and by gesture, the giver and receiver of the idea.

The absence of this quality has been concealed by our dramatists, who have invented clever dialogue and difficult plots, thus keeping up an *excited interest* in place of the *calm knowledge* gained by the unfolding of the inner meaning, which is the only result worth the striving.

In no other way can the drama get into close touch with the people, and we alternate between clean but clumsy melodrama and muddy, intricate, "advanced" plays.

Nor have the repertory theatres, in the hands of Miss Horniman and others, bridged this gulf, though they have widened the scope of the theatre with splendid success.

Vincent Thomas and Ernest Rhys have produced lyric operas on "Guenever" and "Enid," which, I am told, deserve far wider recognition.

On the other side, the Musical Festival remains too musical, and too little a festival. It is, as a rule, severely contemplative, and it lies with the goodwill of the reader to help us to carry our ideas into action, and we rely upon them to devise a means of production, by co-operating with us. Reading is very well in its way, and, in the case of Wagner and Shakespeare, essential to a full understanding of their dramas, but one does not gain

from a book what has been well called "the emotion of multitude." This sympathy between players and people would be intensified were the folk themselves voicing what Bryan Binns calls "the uncanonical scriptures of their race."

From the harvest of other men's dreams, we turn to our own sowing, inviting you to sharpen your sickles for the reaping, and your wits for the reading of the dramatic contents of this volume.

Until a visible and audible production be possible, the reader must perform dramas in the theatre under his own hat, with the chorus of his own sympathies and the orchestra of his own thoughts.

Then, like a crystal-gazer, he may conjure before the eye of the soul the passion and the purport of the scene.

Uther is Passion and Strength.

Igraine is the beautiful Mother.

Merlin is the Prophet, who, having faith in the world's will, sees that, from beauty and strength alone, can come the manhood that we, as a nation, need.

Gorlois is the sullen pessimist, busied in the world's affairs, wholly alien to the pulsing life from which creation springs.

To read into the story a tale of intrigue is to mis-use language and to be blind to that symbolic utterance by which, through old legends, we can express the ideals and yearnings of the human spirit. Compare the morality of the child:

A little girl, aged three, had been left in the nursery by herself, and her brother arrived to find the door closed. The following conversation took place: "I wants to tum in, Cissie!" "But you tan't tum in, Tom!" "But I wants to!" "Well, I'se in my nightie-gown, an' nurse says little boys mustn't see little girls in their nightie-gowns." After an astonished and reflective silence on Tom's side of the door the miniature Eve announced triumphantly, "You tan tum in now, Tom; I tooked it off!"

It may seem absurd to labour the point, but I know of instances where reference to sex and the natural

functions of men and women has been taken as coarse and unseemly.

Indeed, I know of few works of art, apart from the Madonnas of painters, in which mother-love is the main motive.

Yet the sexual strivings, the crimes and the misunderstandings of marriage, supply novelists and playwrights with nine-tenths of their material.

But do we not feel in our hearts that a beautiful woman's love of strength, and a strong man's love of beauty, are the very foundations upon which humanity relies for happiness and for health?

Are not the mother's love and the chastening of man's passions, through fatherhood, the true morality that lies beneath and beyond all moral law?

The whole idea of our drama lies clear in a verse of Shelley:

> "The golden gate of sleep unbar,
> Where strength and beauty met together.
> Kindle their image like a star
> In a sea of glassy weather!"

I read that as a boy at school, when learning cricket from the "pro" and the beauty of life from the poets.

I have not seen the words since, but, like a star, they have remained for me the image of love.

A strong and loving humanity, encouraged by a clean, national art, is our dream.

With your goodwill, we will strive further to symbolise the heroes of our island home, kindling images to make life more lovely and art more full of hope.

REGINALD R. BUCKLEY.

UTHER AND IGRAINE

UTHER AND IGRAINE

CHORAL DRAMA

BY

RUTLAND BOUGHTON

AND

REGINALD R. BUCKLEY

WITH ESSAYS BY THE COLLABORATORS.

CHARACTERS.

UTHER	... ...	*King of Britain.*
ULFIUS	... .	*A Knight.*
MERLIN	... .	*Prophet of Britain.*
ERASTIAS	... ...	*A Knight.*
IGRAINE	. . ..	*Queen of Cornwall.*

The Will of the World.

UTHER AND IGRAINE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Wayside in Cornwall.*
SCENE II.—*Merlin's Mount.*

PRELUDE.

Deep in the shadow of forgotten things,
Rising like mountains round it,
Is a Lake.
White mists o'erwhelm it till its look is mourant.
Deep are its Shadows and its Silences,
But white the foam of its black waters,
When the breathless oars of ghostly rowers break its surface calm.
Its name is known of dead and dreaming Kings,
Whose folded purple lies behind the Night.
Its name is known to children,
While they freely walk mysterious glades.
Its name is known to dim and cloistered souls,
To those who kneel 'fore Altars,
And those whose souls ascend the gleaming pathway of the Secret Stair.

To those who toil 'tis known,
When great ascendant hopes
Goad on the body to the noble task!

'Tis called the Lake of Wonder . . . .
From him who drinks thereof all Doubt is driven.

There was a man, who walked in the Land of Forgotten Things,
And he passed to the Land of Oblivion . . . .

There was a man, who walked amid the Mists,
And he was swallowed up . . . .

There was a man, who bathed in the Lake of Wonder,
And his name was Merlin!

To him are the Wonders of the Deep,
The Mysteries of the Earth,
And the Magic of the Air.

Whence came he, O Waters?
Whence came he?
Deep are the Shadows and the Silences,
Deep as Merlin's heart, ...
Deep as the pool where slept the Dragons, which he slew!

Who bore him? Who begat him?

Deep are the Shadows and the Silences of things remembered,
But not revealed . . . .
O Destiny, is he not thy comrade?
O Light and Darkness, is he not thy servant?

Look ye into the waters of the Lake of Wonder.
Is Love there?
Behold! There lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder.
All the Youth of the World may bathe there.
And they, who have bathed therein, take thence a jewel.
Twain and twain they quit the waters, and hasten to the Woods of Love.

And for those, who lose not the jewel of the Lake of Wonder, it is well.
But for those who lose the jewel it is ill . . . .

Merlin bathed in the Lake of Wonder . . . . alone he bathed there . . . .
And in the Waters came he upon a great jewel,
Which was the Stone of Enchantment.
When he came to the Wood, no woman brought her jewel,
But many, who had lost their jewels came to him, but he said them nay.
For the Children of Enchantment live only for Enchantment,
And, if they rebel, the jewel is ta'en away.

O Lake of Wonder, roll your Mists away!
Strike through the Mist, O Sun,
And give us Day!

Day by the wayside, day and foliage green . . . .
A Cornish lane, where Autumn's hand is seen.
Near Terrabyll, 'neath Gorlois, Cornwall's lord,
Who, 'gainst the King, hath raised a rebel sword.

As light steals through the branches,
The tints of the Autumn glow
Red like the elder passions
Of Loves of long ago!

Along the lane comes Uther,
Clad in the gear of War.
Sir Ulfius, the cautious, beside him walks . . . .

Together they tread the pathway,
Flanked by the shrubs and ferns,
Their weapons agleam in the sunray,
As the lordlier warrior turns . . . .

For he is Uther, the King,
Of stature great and stately,
With eyes of flame, and mighty brows for bastions!

In silence he walks, unheeding his man,
Who first the silence breaks:

Ulfius.
O Lord and mighty warrior, all deeds are done at thy desire.
Thyself hast laid a siege round Terrabyll, and spurring here,
I left Tintagel like to an otter with the dogs upon her.
Within Terrabyll Castle thou hast the Duke in ward,
And his white spouse within Tintagel Keep!

Uther.
Surely the Duke shall fall into my hands,
But think you, Ulfius,
Tintagel shall her keys surrender?

Ulfius.
I know not!

Uther.
And if I gain the keys of that proud castle,
Think you surely
That Igraine shall yield at last?

Ulfius.
Thou art a goodlier man than Gorlois.

Uther.
Ulfius, my men can batter down the gateways,
The men-at-arms may fly before the spear thrusts . . . .
The keep shall fall!
Of fire and flame shall be a triumph!
But shall the flames within my heart, O Ulfius,
Melt the white marble of Igraine?

Ulfius.
Never was wax so white, O King,
That flame should not o'ercome it.

Uther.
If the white marble turn to blackest ashes . . . .
If I have fought for damage, with no delight to crown it!
If, from the ruin, we reap but destruction.

The light steals through the branches.
The weapons and war-gear gleam,
But the eyes of Uther are dull as the gloom of gathering thunder
Sunk in the mood of a dream.

Ulfius.
The sunlight comes . . . . among the clouds it shineth!

Uther.
Thou know'st my sorrow from the first, O Ulfius . . . .
How at the banquet it began . . . .
How she a sudden flame of glory shone before me,
And wild within my breast the torrent rose!
The full, red wine in beakers lay before us,
As with Tintagel's lord we feasted, as a friend,
After the weary wars we'd waged upon him.
In peace, with merry hearts we supped together.
Gorlois was not my foe, yet was he husband of Igraine . . . .
In that wild hour, the flaming wine and torches fired me . . . .
And when we rose to leave the revel,
As King, I bade him yield Igraine to me.
Then was he wroth, and shame and anger reddened
Igraine's white face.
Though Gorlois was mine elder, yet had he full drunk,
And he did threaten me, the King of Britain!
I am resolved, as from that fateful hour it was written,
As I am King do I desire Igraine!

The eyes of Uther are gleaming with gathering storm.

No longer mine the fleeting hopes and dreams of passion!
O Ulfius, these eyes have seen all beauty.
These arms in amorous dream have held the fairest living!
My soul, with purple wings, has beaten upward
Till in the heavens has it fared . . . .
Whence is this flame that round me flares?
Whither or whence I care not, so that she be won!
I am a goodlier man than Gorlois . . . .
Yet Tintagel's lord is set before the King in her embraces!

And so my anger now is as the love-rage of my heart!
His death shall feed my hungry hate.
Igraine's fair body shall before the love-rage fall!
How long shall stand Tintagel?

Ulfius.
My lord, I know not, for it is exceeding strong.
These many years it hath withstood
The shock of storm and tempest and the sword.
Nor God, nor guile hath yet prevailed against it.

Uther.
O Ulfius, there's a sickness come upon me
Nought will cure save victory.
Can'st thou not help me?

Ulfius.
Maybe I can; if thou be patient.
Thou knowest Merlin?

Uther.
Him who was strangely born, half angel and half man?

Ulfius.
Or, so they say, begotten by a devil.
Perchance the Mage may help thee,
Perchance thy passion spurn.
For Merlin's will is moved by fancies,
Dark and wayward to other men.

Uther.
Thy word is good!
Seek out the Mage, and bring him unto me
At Terrabyll.
Thither I go now to lead my men in war.

Ulfius.
And I must seek the Mage alone?

Uther.
Art thou afeard?
Speed on thy task,
For patience hath no home within my heart!

Boldly King Uther goes,
Out of sight along the way . . . .
As Ulfius watches after,
Behind him stalks a wayworn beggar,
Wearily limping, craftily cringing,
Waiting for alms.

Old Man.
Good day, Sir Ulfius.

Ulfius.
Old man, I've nothing for thee.
Leave me in peace!

Old Man.
If I leave thee, Sir Ulfius,
Thy sorrow will not leave thee.

Ulfius.
Get hence, old man! Naught troubles me.

Old Man.
What of the King?
And Gorlois's wife?

Ulfius.
Art thou a spy?

In power and strength the beggar man is risen,
And Ulfius shrinks from him, and stands away.

Old Man.
On yonder Mount when Night's more fully fallen,
Bid the King come and hold communion with me!
For oft it haps that ill and sorry passions
Are but the pods for glorious seed and harvest.

Ulfius.
Who art thou . . . .?

Old Man.
Bid the King come, for even now I go toward yon mountain.
Let the King follow if he love Igraine.

Slowly the old man wends away . . . .
And Ulfius's gaze upon him rests awhile . . . .

Ulfius.
'Twas Merlin's self, who, if tales be true,
Once met two sprites upon the mountain yonder.
One was a messenger of heaven,
The other, envoy of satanic hosts for mercy suing.
There he heard mystic converse,
And may overhear the councils of the highest and the deep.
He knows the ways of men, of beasts and trees,
The starry firmament, the sounding deeps,
And knows the language of the rushing winds.
So will I haste, and bid the King to follow.

Along the lane goes Ulfius,
And all grows bleak and grim.
Crashes the heavy thunder,
The droop of the clouds so dim.
All goes black and dull as the gloom of the thunder gathers,
As it booms in the distance, but ever closer comes.
Naught see we in the storm:
The wayside there no longer.
Keen are the blades of the Swords
That cleave the clamouring sky!
Loud is the boom of the thunder,
hat ever cometh more near.
But the chaos and gloom reveal
A darkling form on a mountain.

Voice of the Storm.

All grows bleak and dim.
All goes black and dull
As the gloom with its Terror!
In the brooding spirit of the Storm
Works the soul of the World and the Will.
For here are revealed the wonders of the deep,
And the magic of the air.
Out of the storm and stress,
Out of the wizard working of worlds,
Toiling 'mid the gloom,
'Mid the shattering boom of the thunder!
Striving to bring to birth
The Son of Fire and Flame,
As from the flame of the lightning
The passion of thunder is risen,
So the godhead of storm
Wakens the world!

Merlin.

O Daranau, thou reinest in thy lightning and thy thunder
Like to a man with mighty passion molten!
Hold back thy blasting breath, while here I commune.
The King comes now for converse and communion,
His heart aflame for Gorlois's wife, Igraine.
O Daranau, thou god of thunder!
O fire and flame that now light up the gloom,
Give me your guidance!

Sharp are the fiery swords that cleave the clamouring sky.
Rising in fierce revolt, the untamed world of darkness!
From out the cauldron of Chaos,
The fire and gloom are come.

Voice of the Storm.

Yearning to break through the wall of their world,
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.

Merlin.

O god of heavenly conflict, thou hast spoken.

E'en as the greatest flash of lightning gives the loudest thunder,
And, as the loudest thunder moves the mountain,
So shall the greatest love give us the Hero!
O flame of Love, which courses through King Uther,
Surround Igraine that Britain may be saved!

Voice of the Storm.

Even as the greatest flash of lightning gives the loudest thunder,
And, as the loudest thunder moves the mountain,
So shall the greatest Love give us the Hero!

Two forms are rising from the murk and darkness.
Together climb they to the mound,
Whereon the Seer,
A King amid the storm, upstandeth.
The one a man of stature great and stately,
And one who fears the lightning, with the crashing thunder. . . . .

Merlin.

All hail, O King, and welcome to Sir Ulfius,
Who sought to hide this sorrow.

Uther.

'Tis not a sorrow, but a mighty love, O Merlin,
Which hath brought me to thee!

Merlin.

There are two Gates to Sorrow's Garden, Uther.
The one is Birth, the other Death is hight.
All that from storm and travail springs
In restless stream shall flow,
And, in the ebb, shall pass with sobs and sighs.

Uther.

What gloom, O Merlin? Thou, who knowest the wonders of the world!

Merlin.

Ye rede me wrong, for know ye not
How Britain in sorrow lingers yet?
Half stand we in bestial Night,
Half reach we to the Dawn!
Knowest thou, Uther, how every sage looks for a glorious kingdom,
More kingly than the realm of kings?
What is conceived by Man, by mankind can be wrought!
What seek we from the King of Britain?

Uther.

Am I a penitent that thus thou pratest?
I come to thee because I love a woman,
That thou, by magic art, mayst do what baffles armies.

Merlin.

Thinkest thou that I will aid thee?

Uther.

I command it, by my sword!

The hand of Merlin rises, with prophetic power,
Upward toward the heavens.
Keen is the blade of the sword that cleaves the clamouring sky.
The sword of Uther 'neath the stroke is shattered!
Loud is the boom of the thunder, shaking the mountain.
Then Merlin turns unto the haughty King and paling Ulfius,
Taking the hilt of Uther's sword, unbroken.

Merlin.

Uther, I will aid thee,
If thou wilt swear one oath:
That, when Igraine is thine,
Thou wilt to me deliver her first-born son!

Uther.
By my sword I swear!
To thee I will deliver her first-born son.

Merlin.
Trust not thy sword o'ermuch.
But now ye must hasten! For the storm returneth,
And e'en to-night thine arms around her close!
Who will go with thee?

The arm of Uther toward pale Ulfius sweeps.

Merlin.
We parley further in Tintagel Castle.

Uther and Ulfius behind the mount go down,
And, by a pathway steep, in haste are gone.
Hear the mad music of the storming thunder
From Chaos's cauldron, when the powers hereunder
Rebel 'gainst heaven till the fires are quenched,
All the armed clouds to rend asunder
Before the Light is victor, and the Dark outdriven.

Merlin.
The light upon the helm of Uther glances.
Go, thou unruly Torch, for Britain shalt thou burn!
And, in thy stead shall come a Light to Britain!
Igraine, fresh from her convent, Gorlois married.
No fatherhood nor destiny is his . . . .
She, the most beauteous in the land mated to Gorlois,
And yet our Britain waits
The coming of a King!
Within his heart unruly love upburneth . . . .
O proud, adulterous heart, thou shalt as incense burn before an Altar!
Daranau, loud voic'd and full of curses,
Thou shalt hear the Voice of Silence . . . .
Wodan, from thy couch of skins,
A wonder shalt thou see!
I follow thee, O Uther . . . .
E'en now, the spell is woven . . . .

Voice of the Storm.
Yearning to break through the wall of our world,
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.

Down the steep path the warriors wend,
'Mid the mad music of the booming thunder . . . .
Like some wild prophet of the powers hereunder
Stands Merlin . . . . calm upon the mountain.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Chamber of Igraine, in Tintagel Castle.*

PRELUDE.

Dark and stark and strong
Tintagel Castle stands!

The splash and the surge of the sea on the rocks of
Tintagel,
The boom of the breakers,
The echoes in chasm and cave . . . .

O hear ye the song of the surges,
That beat in the caves of Tintagel,
The shrill of the pebbles,
The hiss of the backgathering waves.

The gloom of the dusk has been darkened,
And distant the thunder
That rang in the Castle of Gorlois,
And boomed in the caves.

The splash and the surge of the sea on the rocks of
Tintagel . . . .
The boom of the breakers,
The echoes in castle and cave . . . .
The crests of the galloping waves,
The curvetting ocean,
The gloom of the dusk, and the hurrying cloud waves
above . . . .

And, on the headland,
Tintagel Castle stands!

Alone in his cavern, beneath the great headland,
Merlin is brooding . . . .
Dark is the soul of Merlin,
Dark with the doubt of Destiny,
While the Wisdom of the Ages
Slumbers in the womb.

The splash and the surge of the sea,
The dark will of Merlin,
Threaten the Castle of Gorlois!

The watchfires burn and glower,
Where Uther's army lies.
Like to the sea in its strength
Is the passion of Uther!

The surge of the sea, and the love-rage of Uther
Threaten the Castle of Gorlois!

Dark and stark and strong,
Besieged by land and sea,
By sea and sky,
By man and wind and wave beset,
The Castle strongly stands!

Within her chamber, gazing seaward,
In witchery of gleaming moonlight,
Igraine of Cornwall with Sir Brastias waits.

Igraine.
How calm the moon,
The white wave-crests how fair!
Can men wage war on such a night as this?

Brastias.
The wolfish fangs, my lady,
Seek but for flesh to tear.

Igraine.
He would not tear
Her whom he strives to win?

The wind just lifts her hair,
And on her ivory skin
The moonbeams shine.

Brastias.
Men are like wolves when they are ruled by passion.

Igraine.
How fierce his eyes,
And strange his look of longing!
When Gorlois wooed me,
Naught I knew of this.

Brastias.
What learned you, lady,
From false Uther's eyes?

Igraine.
O Brastias, how can I say?
Suppose I were a waxen candle,
Cold upon an altar standing . . . .
And a red flame started down upon me,
And the wax melted, burning up my soul!

Whence is the flame that round her soul is flaring?
Never was wax so white,
That flame should not o'ercome it.

Brastias.
Feel you thus to Uther?
O lady Igraine, I grieve for thee.

Igraine.
I know not whether it be Love
That doth fever all my soul.
But, O my friend, I am a lonely woman . . . .
Gorlois can find his life in war and manhood!

But I . . . . within my soul . . . .
My mother-love hath brought no babe to prove me.
Enough . . . . I weary thee.
Thy love is ever in the land of dreams!
Thou dost not know the yearning of the barren, lonely soul!

The eyes of Brastias turn
That all their tale be hid.
For some men love too well,
And hide within their heart
Those things that may not be.

Brastias.
I age, I age, my lady.
It boots not now, I ween . . . .
But there were days when, with the holy sisters,
There dwelt a maiden called, like thee, Igraine.
She was so beautiful that, in a song, I called her
"The White Igraine, the faery Queen of Cornwall."
In those far days my harp was alway with me,
But now it hangs above my narrow bed.
And a great lord who heard my song, came to me:
"Of whose fair beauty sing you, harper?"
I told him. . . . . Days and weeks went by . . . .
Then knew I that my harp had lost her to me . . . .
My song had won for him a bride!

Then went I, and took service with him.
A knight was I. His trusty knight I've been,
And over her I've guarded till this day.

His head bowed down, Sir Brastias turns away.

Igraine.
Hadst thou no hate for Gorlois?

Brastias.
Nay, Lady, for Love is not unworthy.
The chosen bridegroom of Igraine was Gorlois,
And I thine elder was . . . . and poor.

Igraine.
But Gorlois was mine elder also--

Brastias.
But Gorlois was the lord of Cornwall.

Igraine.
Strange that one schooled by holy sisters
Should be beloved so many ways.
Some men are fierce,
And some are tender for me.
Say, O Brastias, if thou mayest,
Who in the end will hold me?

Brastias.
I am not Merlin,
And Love is deep to fathom.
Sometimes to me it seemeth
That some strange Power,
Moving behind the deeds of men,
Mingles desires, choosing men and women,
Weaves and broiders like a cunning craftsman

Igraine.
Can Uther gain the Castle?

Brastias.
The keep is strong, my lady.
Though men and storms rise up,
They fail to batter down the gateways.

Igraine.
And what of Gorlois?

Brastias.
'Tis said that Merlin weaveth spells against him.

Igraine.
Ha! Ha! Why will ye ever mistrust Merlin?

Brastias.
Why wilt thou ever trust him,
Whose magic is unholy?

Igraine.
What ye call magic is but greater knowledge.

Brastias.
From morn till eve last sennight
In the cave he sat.
What did he there?
No good man liveth thus.

Igraine.
The cave beneath the Castle?

Brastias.
Yea.

Will of the World.
Even now, beneath he broodeth,
While the Wisdom and Love of the Ages
Slumbers in the womb.

Igraine.
And what of that unruly King,
Who with such lawless strength doth love me?

Brastias.
Full sick is he, and carried in a litter,
Like some Arabian infidel to battle.

Igraine.
And is he sick for Love?

Brastias.
Nay, not for Love! For lust and longing,
Half of the body, half of moody brooding!
Like to the king, who looked upon the stars,
And claimed them as the cattle of his pasture!
Uther loves not
As true men love.

Igraine.
Knows any man true Love?

Brastias.
Yea, even he who knows the rapture of which Taliesin sings,
A Love which like a star doth shine,
And, like a star, reveals a world beyond our sense.

Igraine.
'Tis well thou art not wed, O Brastias.
Thou art a dreamer.
Dreams without deeds
Will ne'er reveal that other world of thine.

Brastias.
Deeds without dreams reveal a world far worse.

Will of the World.
Up from the Lake of Wonder
Rise the deeds that were dreams but yesterday,
The dreams that are to-morrow's deeds!
The knowledge that is magic . . . .
The magic of the air . . . .
The knowledge and the passion,
Whence all Creation comes.
O Wonder of Creation!

Loud clangs the postern bell,
A-clang, a-clang, impatient, clamorous . . . .

Igraine.
I feel it is not Gorlois.
Go, Brastias! Who cometh . . . . send him here!

Will of the World.
Hither, O Merlin, Wisdom's soul and Wonder's,
Unto Igraine, who waiteth for her hour
In moonlight's gleam and witchery of gloom.

Dark in the doorway stands the mighty Merlin,
Proud in the utter calm of Manhood.

Merlin.
Igraine, my child,
Thine hour is here.

Igraine.
Mine hour?

Merlin.
Thine hour,
And His who Shall Be!

Igraine.
His who Shall Be?

Will of the World.
She waiteth for her hour
In gleam of hope,
And witchery of Wonder.

Merlin.
Yearning to break through the wall of their world
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.
In the soul of the world, striving for birth,
Are the Men of to-morrow!
Like to the cry of the homeless . . . .
Like to the wail of the children, who clamour for bread,
Yearn the unborn for their bodies,
Where worketh the spirit of Will and of Wonder.
Through the thoughts in the mind of mankind
Works the Will of the Power of Darkness.

Merlin.
That Power hath been upon me,
And hitherward I come,
Even to thee!
Thou art the woman who shalt bear
A wondrous child.

The silence is alive with pulsing thought,
The brooding soul of Woman,
And the Mind of Man . . . .

The Soul of Wonder,
And the World's great Will

Merlin.
Thou dost feel it!
Speak . . . .
Thou dost hear his call?
Hearken . . . .

Will of the World.
Like to the wail of the homeless . . . .
Like to the cry of the children, who clamour for bread,
Yearn the unborn for their bodies to clothe them.

Igraine.
For many years I've brooded o'er my longing . . . .

Merlin.
The bird that lightly lives
Broods but a season.
The Hero Child must needs be carried in the heart for ages,
E'er to flower he come!

Igraine.
But, as the years rolled on,
Gorlois's moody temper grew more sullen.
My soul did sicken!
Starved for lack of love!
Though I conceived not,
Yet did my heart outbear my body,
And, in my secret soul, a mother-love was kindled,
For a babe unknown . . . . unfathered.
And year by year . . . . within this lonely land
I live my life . . . . alone,
Brooding o'er my longing
Like a sea-bird o'er her nest.
But still he came not . . . .
Then did I come to thee for charm to bring me fruitage.
No charm thou gavest me . . . . but Knowledge . . . .
To know the stars, the mighty deep . . . .
All things thou taughtest me!

But one thing thou taughtest not,
E'en to stay the empty craving of my soul!

No more the moonbeams on Igraine are shed.
How very silent is the room become.
Fainter the splash on the rocks of the headland,
Softer the echoes beneath, in the cave.

Igraine.
Who shall his father be?

Merlin.
Speak to thine heart!

Igraine.
Full many a day in peace I've dwelt with Gorlois
Content and calm within his Castle.
But, when proud Uther claimed me at the banquet,
Then did a strange new joy arise within me,
And all my body burned with glad desire!
No shame I felt,
Though thus he read my face of fire.
His eyes of flame from brows of iron shone,
More kingly than the lord of Cornwall.
Great and shapely were his limbs . . . .
And all my mother-soul was quickened 'neath his gaze.

Will of the World.
In the bodily rapture and longing for love
The souls of the unborn are thronging.
The Love of the Woman,
The Love of the Hero,
And the Will of the World are as one!
In the bodily rapture and longing of mother-love,
The Hero-Child is waking to Life!
Yearning to break through the walls of their world,
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.
In the Womb of the World, striving for birth,
Is the Man of To-morrow!

Igraine.
Merlin, thou hast no hate for Gorlois?

Merlin.
Hate have I for no man, but the fool!

Igraine.
A rumour is abroad that thou hast woven spells against him.

Merlin.
All knowledge is but empty magic to the fool.
Heed not this babble!
To thee, who knowest, Truth is but greater Mystery!

Igraine.
'Tis well, O Merlin,
I have ever trusted thee.

Merlin.
No hate have I for Gorlois,
Nor for Uther love.
'Tis only for the Future that I strive!
Thy son shall be both king and saviour to his people!
O fair Igraine, give all thy longing freedom,
And, by thy Love,
Chasten the King!
Burn from his soul the fleeting hopes and dreams of Passion,
So, by thy Love and Wisdom,
Our Britain shall be saved!

Will of the World.
Our Britain that in sorrow lingers yet . . . .

Merlin.
I go to the cave beneath thy chamber,
Nor come I thence
Till in the heavens 'tis written
That Arthur shall be born!

Will of the World.
O lovely mother-longing!
Deep within thy tender soul
The hero-child is trembling into life!

Cradled deep in mother-longing
Sleeps the unborn Hero . . . .

Igraine.
Arthur . . . ! Arthur? . . . .

Then turneth Merlin . . . .
The splash and the surge of the sea
Sound out as he goeth in silence.

Will of the World.
Hither, O Uther, Passion's soul and Power's,
Unto Igraine, who waiteth for her hour
In mystery of midnight,
And mastery of Love!

The clash of mail and armèd clangour sounds,
Nearer . . . . with heavy tread . . . .
Igraine is filled with great foreboding
Like to thoughts in the mind of Mankind
Are the dooms of the power of darkness.
No power is hers, for the Will of the World,
Has gathered her soul in its bondage.
From out the moonlight to the shadow moving,
Behind the purple curtain,
To her secret chamber,
Igraine is gone.
Deep in the shadow . . . . slowly two warriors come.
The first a torch-bearer, in knightly armour,
Holding his flame that all in shadow lies . . . .
Behind, a man in all the pride of power . . . .
Very fearful in the lesser man,
The flame is all a-tremble . . . . near the door he shivers . . . .

Uther.
Go, Ulfius!
With my lady would I speak!
Hast thou an ague, man?

Ulfius.
No, sire . . . . but . . . .

Uther.
Go, ... and warm thee!

Will of the World.
Yearning to break through the walls of their world
Cry the unborn for bodies to clothe them.

Ulfius sets down the torch, high flaming,
Near to the purple curtain of the chamber,
Wherein Igraine awaits the fateful word.
Alone and trembling stands the King,
The torchlight flaming,
As though its flame of Love
Would burn all bonds away.
Deep are the shadows of forgotten things,
Deep amid dead and dreaming kings
Is Gorlois gone.
The curtain parts again,
And in the flaming light,
'Mid shadows cast,
Igraine . . . .

Igraine.
Thou dost tremble,
Like to thy man . . . .
Hast thou an ague?

Her smile like moonlight to his flame of Love . . . .

Uther.
Igraine!

His word, like some far cry of passion, comes . . . .

Igraine.
Speak on! O speak . . . . !
What would'st thou?

Uther.
Thee . . . . !

Igraine.
Speak yet again . . . . !
For many words must I now have with thee.

Uther.
First at the banquet did I love thee.
Thou, and the wine and torches burned in golden blaze!

Igraine.
Nay, Uther, 'twas thyself thou loved'st!
For me . . . . but full of longing.

Uther.
How know'st thou?

Igraine.
I know, and yet I care not.
As thou art King didst thou desire Igraine!
As I am woman, long I for my son . . . . !
And, in that longing,
All my soul is molten passion,
And my body fevered pain.
For my child shall have a hero for his father,
A mighty arm, a kingly will,
Of Wisdom and of Woman unafraid!

Before Love's curtain they stand,
Beneath Love's light,
Passion, the King of the Land!
The Queen of the Night
Shines in Igraine,
Her beauty as white
As the candles that flame on an altar bedight,
For the bridal of King and of Queen.

Igraine.
Hungerest thou?

Uther.
Aye, for thy lips and for thy breast, I hunger!

Igraine.
Thirsteth thou, O King?

Uther.
For thine arms and for thy kisses,
As thirst the deer, when heated chase is done!

Within his arms
King Uther holds his loved one,
The white Igraine,
The faery Queen of Cornwall!

Uther.
And thou, Igraine?

Igraine.
I thirst as doth the dry and parchèd ground,
When rumours of rain come with the rush of winds.

Deep are the shadows and the silences,
Deep as Merlin's heart, whence sprang the dream.

Igraine.
I could linger with thine arms about me
Till all the stars should die.
Till all the heavenly host should melt away,
Like candles on an altar . . . . !

Uther.
And I, Igraine, thy waist would clasp,
Till mine eyes
Failed with looking on thy whiteness!
I would swoon within these arms till time should cease . . . . !

Time is no more with its throb,
In the light of the day,
The Ages are yearning to life,
And the sob of the sea,
Like the surge of their pulses is beating,
In the life that shall be.

His arms around her close . . . .
High flames the torch . . . .

Will of the World.
Go, unruly torch, for Britain shalt thou burn,
And, in thy stead, shall come a light to Britain!

Her head is droop'd . . . . upon his shoulder leaning,
The white Igraine, the faery Queen of Cornwall!
Uther parts the purple curtain,
And with her
Within the secret chamber of Igraine is come.
The curtain falls . . . .

Will of the World.
O starlit night, brood on!
O kindling flame of life, thine hour is here!
For Britain lies in darkness.
Love's fire and flame shall kindle
To-morrow's race of men!
The soul of the Hero alone shall save you,
He only smites the golden Dragon down!
He only into the Light shall lead you,
To show you Life,
And bring you to the Dawn!

Uther.
And if in lands unseen, I waken,
And thou art from me gone,
Again mine eyes shall close . . . . !

Deep are the shadows and the silences,
Deep as Merlin's heart,
Whence sprang the Dream!
Casting aside his cloak,
The Mage with Ulfius cometh.

Merlin.
Ho, Ulfius, dost thou hear?

Ulfius.
Like as the dry and parchèd ground . . . .

She . . . . thirsts for Uther . . .
The earth is full of evil.
What of Gorlois?

Merlin.
Dead!

Ulfius.
Will not . . . . some ill befall?

Merlin.
Tush! Thou art afeard to walk,
Lest into some imagined pit thou shouldest fall.

Ulfius.
Walk we not in sin?

Merlin.
Sin is the fear of the soul, walking in darkness.
Sin is the death of the soul, that knoweth not love.

Like as the dry and parchèd ground.
The world a Hero waits.

Merlin.
And from this ground shall spring
The noblest sapling by Britain grown!
From Earth he springs,
But he shall tower to Heaven!
For earthly passions
Are but as pods for heavenly seed and harvest!
A spell I've woven, with the warp and woof of Fate,
That she may match the frenzy of the King,
Whose hero-blood goes swirling through his veins!
And till the wailing harps proclaim
That Uther unto Vortigern is gone,
Shall white Igraine be filled with Love.

Ulfius.
And is the potion of thy mixing, Merlin?

Merlin.
Nay, it is the wine within their veins,
By the Power behind the veil of darkness mingled!
Look through yon window!
Lo, the vault of heaven,
Where, in the hand of God,
All Fate is written.

Will of the World.
O starlit night, brood on!
O kindling flame of Life, thine hour is here!

The splash of the sea on the rocks of the headland
Fainter is grown, and the storm is gone by!
But the waves are grown fresh, with the joy of their surge,
The air is grown keen with the salt of their spray!

Merlin.
See'st thou not a point of lurid fire,
Which o'er the sea is set?

Ulfius.
I see, O Merlin,
If but at the spell of thy deep art.

With arm on high,
With eyes in glory flaming,
The voice of Merlin grows,
Like to the battle-cry of kings,
As the prophetic Voice that sings aloud
The Will of God in Man!

Merlin.
Lurid grows the Star of Arthur, there . . . !

Ulfius.
Arthur . . . . dost thou say?

Sound loud the trumpet note of flame,
Exultant in the glory of his name,
His, who shall be!

Merlin.
Arthur, of Britain, king and lord!
He, with a glorious rule, shall sway the people,
And to his knights shall Mystery be revealed!
But, as in Man there dwell two seeds,
The one of Death,
The other Life,
So shall he die . . . .
His glorious kingdom shall have end!

The Hand of God is come upon him!
In trancèd ecstacy he sways,
His soul between the Seen and Unseen trembles,
In spheral power his voice is raised!

Merlin.
Then shall the Seven Curses come upon the kingdom!
A curse upon the land,
Where the proud man shall herd his wild deer,
And the poor man have no field to give him bread!

Forth from the Unseen is it spoken,
And it shall burn within the soul of the free!

Merlin.
A curse shall come upon the eyes that they see no beauty,
Upon the lips that they sing no praise!

Truth from the Godhead hath been sounded,
And it shall blaze before the vision of the free!

Merlin.
A curse upon the body that its glory become unclean,
That the lust of the sun
Be as shame in the darkness!

Uther and his loved one hurl defiance
To an age that is sunken in the dust!

Merlin.
A curse upon those who are wedded and love not,

And a curse upon a people,
Come tired from the womb!

Hear, O ye people, in your weakness,
And ye shall live again the Life of the Strong!

Merlin.
When these curses are come upon the people,
Let them cry aloud
For the second coming of the King!

Ulfius.
All hail, red star! And royal herald, hail!

Merlin.
Arthur, king unborn,
Thus shalt thou rule:
Thy law shall be
To pluck the Flowers of Freedom!
Wield the passion of Uther,
And the calm thought of Igraine!
Free thy people
From the Dragon of fear
And the black brand of shame!
And then, perchance, once again the Grail may come among us;
Once again a Light may come from Heaven;
And, in the pure flame of Eternal Love,
Burn all our shame and sin away!

So far can Merlin go.
My spell is woven.
The bar of my power is here,
And all my deeds
Lie drifting on the deep!
The Mage's sun is set,
But when the wailing harps proclaim
That Uther unto Vortigern is gone,
That he, with fathers dead, doth lie,
The flower of all our sowing riseth!

So, to the Power behind the Veil of Darkness,
Where all my might and magic naught avail me,
To Thee I trust great Uther,
Fair Igraine,
And yon red Star . . . . !

Will of the World.
O starlit Night, brood on!
O kindling flame of Life,
Thine hour is here.
Love and the Night of Stars,
And the surge of the sea,
Sing the song of the spheres!

The world on the bosom of Night
Leans full of yearning and dreams;
The red flowers of sleep,
And the fire of stars,
And the breathing of Love,
Are as one.

Languid as love that is spent,
We lie in the darkness;
But now cometh longing
And new love to save us!
Fire of the waters that gleam in the moonlight!

Thine is the glory, O Love!

Fire of the starshine, at promise of Dawn!

Flame in the heavens above.

Like the sea in its raging strength
Is passion at midnight;

The billows are leaping,
Anger high,

With the tossing of spray

Spitting scorn at the moon's pale flame.
Now cometh longing and red fire to save us,

At the dawning of Day!

Leap high, O billows!
Spit scorn, O spray!
Rise on your passion,
And all the world,
In fiery glow
Shall burn its shame away!

At Dawn of the Hero
The world is newly wed;
And her lover lies upon her breast.

Come, O sky, and wrap around us,
Let thy stars grow pale and die;
Come, O sun, and flood our bodies
With thine awful purity.
No longer now
Shall passion hide in shame,
For our souls are glowing
With the promise of the day.

O Lake of Wonder,
Roll your mists away;
And in the shadow of thy waters clear,
Reveal the mystery of Life and Love!

* * * * * * *

A Far Vision.

Behold there lie jewels in the Lake of Wonder!
All the youth of the world may bathe there;
And they who have bathed therein
Take thence a jewel;
Twain and twain quit they the waters,
And hasten to the woods of love.

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